

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES

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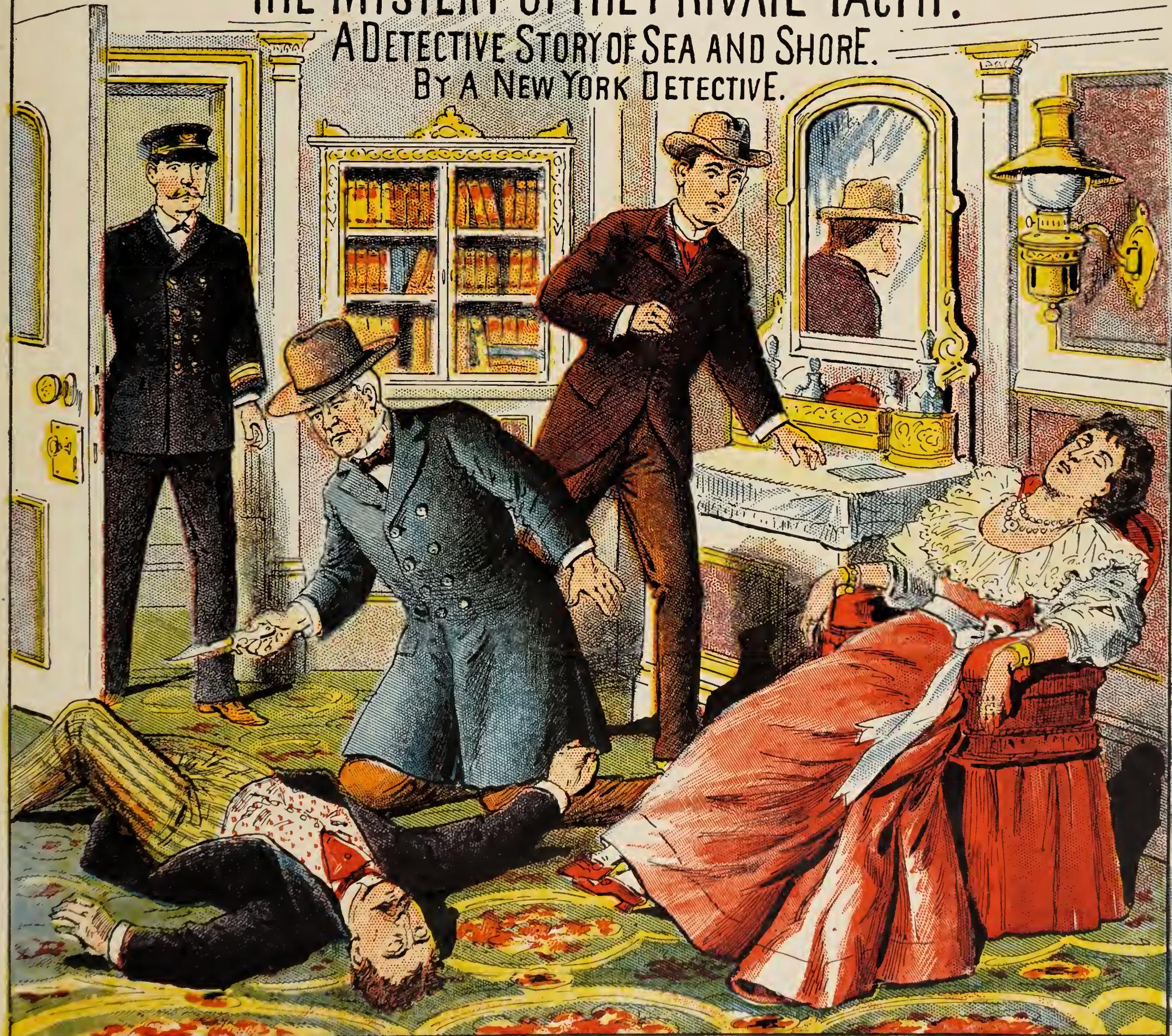
THE BRADYS ON DECK;

OR

THE MYSTERY OF THE PRIVATE YACHT.

A DETECTIVE STORY OF SEA AND SHORE.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



Aghast, the detectives gazed upon this thrilling scene. Old King Brady stepped into the state-room. He noted the position of the bodies. Then he knelt over the man. He examined the wounds and picked up an ugly dirk. "A murder!" he said.

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NEW YORK, June 1, 1900.

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The Bradys On Deck

OR,

The Mystery of the Private Yacht.

A Detective Story of Sea and Shore.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERY OF THE YACHT.

"That craft certainly behaves very queer," Captain Lee, of the West Indian steamer *Metamora*, remarked, as he closed his glass and turned from the rail where a number of the passengers and crew were gathered. "Whoever has her helm acts reckless and foolish. If the sea was not smooth she'd go over."

The craft in question was visible to leeward, and not many miles off the entrance to New York harbor.

She was a fine sailing yacht of a type used by amateur sailors in the waters of the harbor or the Sound.

She pursued an erratic course, seeming to follow the will of every puff of wind and at times, caught abeam by a gust, going nearly over.

Nobody could be seen on her decks.

Every sail was set and she presented a handsome spectacle as she ran back and forth.

The *Metamora* was proceeding slowly under steam, and in a few hours would be safe in the harbor.

Among the interested passengers were two men of remarkable appearance.

One was tall and of robust figure with strong iron features and white hair.

He was dressed in a tight-fitting blue coat, a stock collar, and wore a broad, slouch hat.

His companion was of his type, but much younger. They scrutinized the distant yacht for some while, closely. Then the older man said:

"Well, Harry, if I were to express my opinion, I should say that that vessel's helm was lashed!"

"She certainly acts that way," agreed the younger man.

"What's that, Mr. Brady?" asked one of the passengers who appeared to know the two men. "You think there is nobody at her helm?"

"I do," replied the older man. "She behaves like it."

The captain again stepped to the rail.

He had overheard this last remark.

He again brought his glass to bear and scrutinized the yacht long and silently. Then he said:

"Mr. Brady is right. There is no one at the helm."

"Where are the crew?" asked the passengers in a breath.

"They must be all asleep. It is possible that the helmsman lashed the wheel and went below."

"Is not that unusual and risky?"

"Oh! yes, if left for an extended length of time."

The man called Mr. Brady smiled and bowed in acquiescence. He and his younger companion walked *aft*.

They were returning from Jacksonville, whither a *case* of crime had called them. For they were detectives.

James Brady, the older man, was famous as New York's greatest sleuth.

For many years he had been the terror of evil-doers in Gotham.

He had earned the sobriquet of Old King Brady. By this name he was known the country over.

Harry Brady, though bearing the same name was of no blood relation. The older detective had become interested in him and taken him under his wing.

So well had Harry Brady succeeded that he was now ranked as hardly second to the old detective.

He was known as Young King Brady, from his association with Old King Brady.

"Well, Harry," said the old detective, as they strolled aft. "We had pretty good luck in Jacksonville."

"Yes, you are right," agreed Harry. "I am well satisfied."

"Indeed, so am I. I wonder what new case we'll have when we get to New York?"

"I have no doubt the chief will find something lively for us."

"Oh, sure! He will do his best."

"We have not been defeated yet."

"No."

"Luck has been with us."

"It is not all luck. Take some credit to yourself, partner. It has been skill."

"Well, perhaps so," said Old King Brady, modestly. "But what is this? The yacht is drawing down upon us."

This was true.

There was great excitement among the passengers and the crew. The captain had leaped upon the bridge.

The derelict yacht had headed for the steamship and a spanking breeze was driving her at great speed.

A collision seemed certain.

Such a thing might mean not alone destruction to the yacht, but perhaps the sinking of the steamer.

It was quite possible for even so small a craft to drive a hole in the hull of the Metamora.

So orders were sent to the engine room for more speed.

The pilot changed his course so as to dodge the oncoming craft.

All was excitement.

On came the yacht.

It could be seen now plainly that there was not a soul on her decks. She was apparently deserted.

What was the mystery?

Had she broken her moorings and raced away to sea? But this did not seem probable in face of two things.

First, no vessel at moorings would have all sail set.

Next, it was hardly likely that she would be left entirely alone, even then. Had the crew deserted her on purpose?

The steamship warped just in time and the yacht sped by.

The danger was over.

But now the curiosity of all on board was aroused. The danger to the Metamora had been great.

What would it be to the next vessel she encountered?

The captain of the Metamora recognized it as his duty to try and remove that impediment and peril to navigation.

The yacht must be boarded.

The captain brought the Metamora about and ordered out the cutter.

It was manned and the jolly tars pulled away for the drifting yacht.

But it proved extremely elusive.

Just as they would draw down near it a change of breeze would throw her off on another tack.

There was also some danger.

The yacht in its course would suddenly bear full tilt down upon the cutter. In one of these erratic moves she grazed the cutter and one of the crew grasped her rail.

He was aboard in a flash.

It did not take him long to reach the helm and unlash it. Then he brought her up to the wind and the cutter came alongside.

Down came the sails.

The yacht was now under control and drifted up alongside the steamer.

She was lashed and the captain descended to her deck.

He looked her decks over and then descended into the cabin.

But he came up as quickly as he went down.

He was pale as a ghost.

"Send Mr. Brady and his friend down here!" he ordered.

The detectives heard the command.

They exchanged glances.

"By jove!" said Harry. "What is up? Is it a new case?"

"Indeed, it would look like it," agreed the old detective. "Let us see!"

So the two detectives descended to the deck below.

They met the captain.

"Gentlemen," he said in a low tone of voice, "we must keep this away from the passengers."

"What is it?" asked Harry.

"Come with me!"

He led the way down the cabin stairs. In another moment they were in the yacht's cabin.

It was richly appointed.

It was plain that the craft was the property of a very wealthy man. Where was he?

The captain led the detectives to the open door of a stateroom. The sight which met their gaze was fearful.

Upon the floor of the stateroom lay the corpse of a man.

He was of middle age, finely dressed and of patrician mould. He was covered with blood.

There were several stab wounds in his side.

This was not all.

Seated in a chair near the side of the stateroom was a woman.

She was richly dressed and costly diamonds gleamed in her hair and about her alabaster throat.

There was no mark of violence upon her.

But she was dead.

Aghast the detectives gazed upon this thrilling scene.

Old King Brady stepped into the stateroom. He noted the position of the bodies and glanced about.

Then he knelt over the man.

He examined the wounds and picked up an ugly dirk.

"A murder!" he said.

Leaving the man he approached the woman. Very carefully he looked in her face and examined the position of the body.

The tip of the tongue was exposed.

Old King Brady forced open the jaw till he could see more of the tongue.

Then he said:

"Suicide!"

"How do you know that?" asked the captain in surprise.

"By the condition of the woman's mouth," said Old King Brady. "It is excoriated. She has taken a virulent poison."

"Let us look further," said the captain. "We may find an explanation."

"Very well," agreed the detectives.

So they went through the yacht. But no other sign of human beings was found.

After the quest, however, the detectives returned to the stateroom. On the cabin floor Old King Brady picked up a fragment of paper.

On it was written:

"Hugo: There is no use for further concealment. The crash must come. I do not fear to die. After I am gone perhaps you will be happier. We may meet in another world. For that reason I will write, forever, au revoir.

"Yours, Kitty."

This was all the real clew to the dark and strange mystery.

CHAPTER II.

A DOUBLE TRAIL.

The true state of affairs in the yacht's cabin was kept a secret from the passengers of the Metamora.

The captain put a working crew aboard the Hyacinthe, which was the yacht's name.

The Bradys decided to sail in on the yacht.

They were interested in the mystery and desired to seek its solution.

So the Hyacinthe stood in under mainsail and jib.

In a few hours she was off the Battery. Then word was sent ashore and the authorities came out.

Among them was the coroner. A careful examination of the yacht was made.

But strange to say, the name of no living person could be found aboard her. There were no records or books to give evidence as to her ownership.

Not the least inkling of the identity of the yacht and its owner and crew could be found.

A stranger case could hardly be conceived. The detectives were silent and non-committal.

If they had formed an opinion they did not express it.

Nobody could be found who knew the yacht or had ever heard of her before. The two dead people could not be identified.

It was assumed she was an American craft, for she flew the American flag.

Who were the crew and what had become of them was a mystery.

The bodies were removed to the morgue.

The yacht was kept anchored in the harbor. Special watchmen were put aboard her.

The Bradys finally dropped work on the case for a time.

They went ashore and paid a visit to the office of the Chief of the Secret Service.

As they entered the chief greeted them cordially.

"Ah! gentlemen," he cried, "I am delighted to see you. You had grand success in Florida."

"The very best," replied Old King Brady. "We came home winners."

"Very good! I am glad to hear it. I suppose you are ready for new work?"

"Yes."

"At least," said Harry, "we have already found a case worthy of the mettle of any detective in this country."

The chief opened his eyes.

"That is interesting," he said. "What can it be?"

With this the detectives detailed the story of the Hyacinthe and its mystery.

The chief listened with deepest interest.

"Well, that is a mystery," he agreed. "I have not heard anything to excel it for a good while. Where do you suppose the yacht belongs?"

"That is yet to be unearthed," said Old King Brady. "It is by no means a light task."

"I should say not. You believe that murder was committed?"

"I certainly do."

"Humph! There is not the slightest clew as yet?"

"Not the slightest."

The chief was silent some moments.

Then he resumed:

"Have you an idea of undertaking this case?"

"It has interested us," said Old King Brady.

"Well, go ahead with it."

"But you had something laid up for us?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

The chief took out his note-book.

"A case of mysterious disappearance," he said. "A wealthy citizen of Mamaroneck has vanished and no trace of him can be found!"

"What are the details?"

The chief scanned his note-book.

"Douglas Wild, millionaire, bachelor, and in some respects a misanthrope, lived in a fine old mansion just back from the shore."

"He is not known to have a living relative. Absolutely nothing is known of his antecedents. He kept a retinue of servants and at times parties of friends came to his house."

"But nobody in the town knew them. The private life of Douglas Wild was all a mystery. One night a tall man in a dark cloak came to the house."

"Wild was closeted with him until long past midnight."

Then, the servants say, both went out and walked along the shore.

"They did not return. Several days passed and then the servants gave the alarm. Search was made, but it was all in vain. Not a trace of the missing millionaire could be found.

"This is the case. Detectives are working upon the matter, but nothing is found in the nature of an explanation. I have waited for you to put the case in your hands."

"Very good!" agreed Old King Brady, "but how do you know that we can do any more with it than anyone else?"

"Well, you have success."

"You say he has no relatives?"

"None."

"What will be done with his property?"

"His affairs are all in the hands of Waitt and Walker, of lower Broadway. They are as deeply puzzled as anybody. But they report everything all straight."

"Well," said Old King Brady, "there is no further evidence that he has been foully dealt with."

"None."

"He may return in due time."

"Certainly! But the case demands immediate investigation."

"That is so," agreed Old King Brady. "I am interested in it very deeply."

"But I don't see how we can handle both cases at once," said Harry.

"That is so," agreed the chief.

Old King Brady was thoughtful a moment. Then he said:

"I have the solution!"

Both the chief and Harry were attentive.

"Well?" asked the chief.

"There is no reason why we should both of us work on the yacht case. Let us divide our forces for once!"

Harry looked surprised.

"It will be the first time," he said.

"I know, we have always worked together," said Old King Brady, "but we need not work singly all the while now. When I find an idle day I will join you. You can do the same by me."

The chief's face brightened.

"I think that is a capital plan," he cried. "That will aid me greatly. I shall have the services of you both on two different cases!"

"What do you say?" asked the old detective.

"All right! I agree to it." declared the young detective.

"What case will you take?"

"The yacht mystery!"

"Very well, I will proceed to Mamaroneck and look the field over. You will always be able to locate me by leaving a letter at this office."

"And the same with me," said Harry. "So it is settled."

The two detectives arose.

The chief was delighted.

"I wish you both success," he said. "Let me know how you progress."

The two Bradys left the office.

They separated on the street below. Harry proceeded to the Battery intending to pay the yacht a visit.

Old King Brady went to the depot and took a train for Mamaroneck.

In due time he alighted at the station in that little town.

He walked easily to the locality of Douglas Wild's residence.

He saw a fine old colonial mansion looking out upon the sea.

It had fine grounds and showed the results of good care. The detective leisurely strolled about the place.

He saw a man leaning over the fence in an idle fashion.

The detective leisurely approached him and said:

"Good-day to you, sir."

"Good-day, sor," replied the man in a deep brogue. "It's a foine day, sor."

"So it is," replied the old detective. "And a fine view you have of the sea here."

"Arrah! the view is foine, sor. But shure phwat good is it to the loikes of me now, sor?"

"Eh? Are you in trouble?" asked the old detective.

"Trouble, is it, sor? Well, to be shure none av us knows phwat we'll be doin' from wan day to another."

"What's happened?"

"Shure an' haven't yez heard?"

"Not a word."

The Irishman stared at the detective.

"Yez are a stranger?"

"Yes."

"Arrah! that's easy, thin. Well, sor, there's the devil to pay. Do yez see this foine place? Shure there's no master here no more."

"No master?"

"Devil a bit! He's done clean gone an' nobody kin tell where. Some think he's in the say, drownded, an' some think he's gone mad. But he don't come back, sor."

"Pshaw! What's his name?"

"It's Misther Douglas Wild, sor. Shure he's the richest man about here. I'm his gardener if yez don't know it. Me name is Patrick Corry."

Old King Brady feigned surprise and interest.

"Why, that is very mysterious," he said. "Has he no family?"

"Devil a chick or a child."

"Don't you know of any relative?"

"Devil a wan, sor."

"But didn't he have any visitors?"

"Oh! shure, sor. A plinty of them. But I cudn't tell yez where they came from."

"Look here, Patrick," said Old King Brady, finally, in a confidential tone. "I believe you're a trusty man."

"That I am, sor."

"Well, now, I am going to try and find your master."

The Irishman's eyes opened wide.

"Yez are?" he asked in amazement.

"Yes."

"Shure, sor, if yez will do that——"

"Look here!"

The detective showed his star. Patrick stared at it.

"Do you know what that means?"

"You're a policeman, is it?"

"I am a detective from New York. Mind, you are to keep it dark. Do you understand, Patrick?"

"Yis, sor."

"Now, I want your assistance. My name is Brady."

"Brady, is it? Shure it's a good Irish name. I've seen many a Brady in me own town in Oireland."

"Well, then, we're both Irishmen. Now, Patrick, give me your hand."

"It's here, sor."

"I want your help. I have got to make a very close search of the grounds and the house."

"The house, sor? Mullins, the butler, won't let a divil's son av us in there."

"Well, then, we must git rid of Mullins in some way. I want your promise to help me get into the house. Perhaps the very clew I want is there."

"I'll do it," agreed Patrick Corry.

CHAPTER III.

AMONG THE SAILORS.

Harry Brady had hastened away toward the Battery.

The young detective realized the enormity of the undertaking he had assumed.

Heretofore, in all cases he had been able to depend entirely on the advice and assistance of Old King Brady.

But Harry Brady was keen and smart.

He had already won his spurs in many a hard-fought case. He saw before him only a chance to distinguish himself.

And he was bound to embrace it.

When he reached the Battery he found the yacht's boat where he had left it. He at once proceeded to board the Hyacinthe.

A crew had been placed aboard her. It was decided to keep her in commission until her mystery was solved.

First Harry proceeded to despatch messages of inquiry to every important part on the coast, north and south.

The yacht was described and information as to her owner and port was asked.

For a whole day the young detective pursued the inquiry.

But messages came in reply from all points:

"No such craft entered on the records here. No owner to be found."

The young detective was puzzled.

"Well," he declared. "The yacht must hail from somewhere. She was built by human hands and somebody must know her history."

But the mystery remained.

After futile efforts in this direction, Harry decided upon a new plan.

He decided to take a cruise out to the point where she was found. He made a note of the quarter in which her helm was lashed and tried to draw deductions therefrom. But it seemed to yield nothing.

The Hyacinthe was sailed down the harbor and Harry tried to figure from what part she had come.

He tried theory and guesswork and elaborated hypothetical conclusions. But all in vain.

He only got deeper and deeper into the tangle.

It was certainly baffling.

An ordinary man might have abandoned the job.

But Harry Brady was not that kind. He was determined to solve the mystery.

He again explored the cabin.

This time he found what proved to be the first tangible clew. At that it was but a slight one.

It was the torn leaf of a memorandum. Upon it was a slight record:

"Memo. of Merton Steele."

"Have the wires all laid. Shall spring the trap at twelve to-night. What will the false wife say? I care not what happens if I get my twenty thousand. That will pay for my home in—"

Here the leaf was torn and the balance was missing.

Harry read this with interest.

The name seemed to him the most valuable of all.

"Merton Steele," he mused. "I wonder if I can trace him."

Satisfied that it was impossible to arrive at any deduction as to what point the yacht came from, Harry decided to return to New York.

"At any rate," he muttered, "I have got a clew. It may be a small one, but a clew is a clew, and the Bradys are right on deck."

The yacht ran in and anchored again near the Battery.

Then Harry went ashore.

He consulted the directory of New York. But though he found men by the name of Steele, he was satisfied that his man was not among them.

He was baffled.

He knew not which way to turn. In vain he tried to think up some logical plan of action.

Finally he recalled his promise to Old King Brady to assist him in his case at Mamaroneck if he failed in making anything of the yachting mystery.

He half decided to do this.

Then he sat down resolutely and began fresh deductions.

"Given a yacht," he said reflectively, "with a crew and passengers aboard. Two of the passengers—there may have been no more—are deprived of life in some manner unknown, but presumably by murder and suicide."

"This is the problem. Now, the other or surviving passengers must have made their escape. The crew of the vessel must be somewhere in existence. If one of them could be found—"

The young detective sprang up.

He knew that sailors were superstitious. There was no reason to doubt that they might have been impelled to leave the yacht through superstitious terror.

In that case they would come to New York and seek berths aboard other vessels.

Sailors are bound to talk. There was no doubt that they would disclose, perhaps inadvertently, the story of the *Hyacinthe* tragedy.

The thought gave Harry an inspiration.

Why not look for the crew of the yacht among the shipping of New York?

It looked like a hopeless quest and the finding of a needle in a hay stack.

But there was the chance and Harry was bound to try it.

He returned at once to the Battery. Then he went to the different shipping offices and hung about the sailors' lodgings.

He found scores of men waiting for a berth aboard ship.

But among them he was at a loss to pick out the right ones.

Finally he adopted a method which he fancied might work.

He dressed himself up as a sailor and mingled with the seafaring men. He picked up one acquaintance after another and always asked the question:

"Do ye know, mate, where I may find the yacht *Hyacinthe*?"

It was a clever game.

One after another of the sailors he met shook their heads in negative reply.

But in one drinking saloon he met a hardy tar who asked him to have a glass of rum.

As they stood at the bar Harry again asked the question:

"I say, mate, did ye ever hear tell of the yacht *Hyacinthe*?"

Harry's companion looked blankly at him and answered in the negative.

But another sailor who was drinking at his elbow, turned and said:

"Hey, mate! What do ye want to know about the *Hyacinthe*?"

"Ah," said Harry, turning upon him. "Ye're one of her hands?"

"Well, an' if I was, hearty, what of that?"

"All free and good," replied Harry. "Who was her skipper when ye were aboard?"

The tar, who was a keen-eyed, smooth-faced Jack of middle age, looked at Harry in an inscrutable way.

"Who are ye?" he asked in a low tone. "What's yer port?"

"New York. What's yours?"

"Anywhere I strike. Why do ye ask for the *Hyacinthe*?"

"I was once aboard her."

"That's a lie."

This vigorous declaration rang through the room. Every sailor turned and looked at Harry.

Now, the young detective knew what this meant.

He was sufficiently familiar with sailor etiquette to

know that this insult must be resented else he would lose caste and be dubbed a poltroon.

Harry's friend, Ben Leach, with whom he was drinking, pushed in between the young detective and the other tar.

"Bust me!" he exclaimed, "d'ye mean that bit of slang, skipper?"

"You can lay your life I do," retorted the other.

Ben turned to Harry.

"Mate," he said, "if ye don't teach the ill-mannered lubber a lesson, I'll have to do it for ye!"

And Ben began to roll up his sleeves. The giver of the insult jeeringly said:

"So it's you, eh, old hard-tack? The young un's afraid to fight?"

"No," said Harry, very quietly, pushing Leach aside. "The young 'un is not afraid to fight."

With this, Harry drew his right hand smartly across the other's face. This settled the question.

The rough sailors crowded about and seconds were appointed.

It was proposed to adjourn to the quiet of a nearby wharf and settle the question of honor.

This was all in accordance with true sailor spirit.

Harry's adversary gave his name as Bob Benson. He was a sturdily-built fellow and strong, but clumsy, as Harry had guessed.

The young detective was a skillful boxer. He believed that he could worst his man by the use of pure science.

So when the wharf was reached he did not hesitate to face him.

Benson looked with contempt upon the somewhat slender frame of the young detective.

But Harry only smiled and doubled up his fists.

He stood awaiting the attack of his adversary.

He had not long to wait.

Benson was all ready to assume the aggressive and he started in at once to thrash his man.

He made a terrific pass at Harry. But the young detective only stepped back and evaded the attack.

At the same time he saw that his foe's guard was down.

He embraced the opportunity.

Quick as a flash he sent in a terrific blow which caught Benson under the ear.

He went down like a falling tree. For a moment he was stunned.

The referee began to count. But furious with pain and shame, Benson sprang up.

He made a terrible rush at Harry, making his arms go like flails. But the young detective easily parried these random blows.

Then of a sudden he saw his chance. Benson was a bit weary.

Harry now gathered himself up for a rush.

Swiftly and skillfully he parried the defence of his adversary. Then he fairly rained blows upon him.

Benson's guard was literally beaten down and he suddenly caught a right hand swing on the point of the jaw.

He went down and out.

The referee counted slowly. But the time elapsed and Harry was the winner.

The sailors crowded about him with congratulations.

Sailors admire pluck and especially sympathize with the weaker side. But Harry's adversary proved that he was manly.

He regained his feet with difficulty and extended his hand.

"Boy," he said, "keelhaul me, but ye done well. I've no fault to find, hearty. I was licked fair."

Harry gripped his hand.

"We will be good friends," he said.

"Aye, lad, just the same."

Benson crowded closely against Harry now, and whispered:

"Come with me my merry lad. I've a bit to talk with ye about the Hyacinthe."

CHAPTER IV.

OLD KING BRADY'S CLEW.

Old King Brady was indeed glad that he had been able to make the compact with Patrick Corry, the gardener.

He knew that much depended upon getting a look into the house.

He believed that he might possibly find there a clew to the mysterious disappearance of Douglas Wild.

Corry had declared that Mullins, the butler, would let nobody enter the place. But Old King Brady had an expedient.

"We'll fix him," he said. "I have a plan."

"Ah! sor, but yez will do well if ye fool Mullins," declared Patrick.

"Well, you shall see. He is fond of a nip of whisky, is he not?"

Patrick's eyes glistened.

"His name wouldn't be Mullins if that wah not thtrue," he said.

"Ah! very good. Now we'll arrange it. Do I look like an Irishman?"

Patrick screwed his eyes around.

"Av I look at yez crosseyed, it moight do," he cried.

"Wait a moment," said the detective. "You know my name is Brady."

"Shure that's Trish."

"Of course. Now look here!"

In a flash the old detective had donned galways and a red wig. A touch of cosmetic in the corners of the mouth and eyes and the trick was done.

Patrick was astonished.

"Mither av Mary!" he gasped. "I'd think ye was Larry O'Toole from Connaught."

"Well, call me that," agreed Old King Brady. "Introduce me to Mullins. I've some fine whisky. If ever he takes a drink of it he'll sleep so sound to-night that an earthquake won't wake him."

Patrick was delighted.

"Shure that'll be a foine thrick," he cried. "It's ready I am to thry it."

"All right! Just lead the way."

Corry was nothing loath.

He led the way to the rear entrance of the house. There they chanced to meet Mullins. He was a tall, strapping son of Erin.

Corry made the introduction in fine style.

The detective played his part well. He was extremely polite and suave and soon had induced Mullins to drink.

Now, there was a drug in the liquor and Old King Brady knew full well what the sequel would be.

It did not take long to put Mullins in a very happy mood, indeed. He invited Corry and the detective into the sub-cellars and a jolly time followed.

Soon, however, Mullins grew very sleepy. He finally yielded and dropped off into a doze. Instantly Old King Brady arose.

"Come on, Patrick," he said, "everything is all right now. He is harmless."

"Do yez think that?"

"Yes."

Corry procured the keys from Mullins' pocket. Then they entered the house.

Until a late hour Old King Brady ransacked the mansion. However, he seemed unable to find a clew.

He was about to give up the quest when Corry came up and said:

"Shure, Mistrher Brady, wud this be of any use to yez?"

"What is it?" asked the detective. He saw that the Irishman held in his hand a pair of gloves.

"There, sor," said Corry. "The gentleman who wint away wid the masther left these."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Old King Brady, with interest. "Let me see them."

The old detective examined the gloves, but he saw nothing about them which would serve to explain the mysterious disappearance of the millionaire.

However, he said:

"Well, I'll keep them, Patrick. They may prove of value."

And he put them in his pocket.

This was the only clew gained in the long quest. Nothing which could throw light on the millionaire's past life was found.

Not a letter, nor a message, nor a memorandum of any kind.

It was disappointing.

However, the old detective could not help but feel that he had done his duty.

He paid Patrick for his services and took his leave.

He could see nothing more to be gained by remaining at Mamaroneck. He determined to lie low and await developments for a few days.

It occurred to him in the interval to return to New York and offer Harry assistance on the yacht mystery case.

It was too late at night to accomplish anything when he reached the city.

So he went to his lodgings for the night.

He was early astir and went down to the Battery.

But the *Hyacinthe* was not there.

It was the day that Harry took for his cruise down the harbor. Old King Brady was unable to learn what had become of the yacht.

He went up to Headquarters but the chief knew nothing of the matter.

All that day the old detective spent in wandering about the wharves.

The next afternoon he chanced to visit the Battery again.

This time he saw the yacht at her moorings. At once he took a boat and paid her a visit.

Her crew were aboard and Old King Brady learned what had occurred in the meanwhile. But Harry was not aboard and nobody knew where he was.

"Well," thought Old King Brady, "I'll make myself comfortable here. He must come back here sometime."

So he got a chair out on deck and settled down to a smoke.

Let us now return to Harry and his new-made acquaintances on the wharf.

His thrashing of Bob Benson made him a hero in the eyes of the sailors.

Ben Leach was delighted.

"Dang my buttons!" he roared, "he handles himself like a dandy. Dash me, but I like the lad."

Benson in an undertone had said:

"I want to have a talk with ye about the *Hyacinthe*."

Harry was startled.

But nothing could have occurred to suit him better.

"All right, mate," he replied. "I'd like to talk with another who has been aboard the old craft."

Leach and the other sailors returned to the drinking saloon.

But Harry and Benson seemed to fraternize, and they strolled away together. Already it had grown dark.

Their steps led them to the Battery.

They found a settee in a secluded part of the park and sat down. Benson seemed much excited.

"Now, mate," said he, "tell me the truth, lad, were ye ever aboard the *Hyacinthe*?"

"Yes," replied Harry, truthfully.

"An' ye've sailed her?"

"I have."

"Well, what's her skipper's name?"

"I've forgotten," replied Harry. "Why I'm asking about her is because I heard that she was found adrift out at sea, with a dead man and woman aboard."

Benson knit his brow.

His ruddy face paled.

"There's no luck in the dead," he said. "We couldn't stay aboard after that."

"I don't blame ye," said Harry, quietly. "Is that why ye all left the yacht?"

Benson shook his head.

"But for that dark man who came aboard," he said, "everything would have been all right. There's no better man ever sailed the blue than Hugo Page."

Harry gave a start.

He recalled the note found in the cabin addressed to Hugo and signed Kitty. Probably she was the woman suicide.

"Hugo Page!" exclaimed Harry. "Oh! yes, that is the very chap. He was a good skipper."

"He was that, lad, listen to me," vehemently declared Benson.

"Was not he the murdered man found in the cabin?"

"Yes," replied Benson, in a hushed voice. "He's the man. It was a terrible thing. And the poor lady had killed herself——"

"Killed herself?"

"Yes. Then Hugo and the dark stranger fought. Ah! we would have helped the skipper, but it was too late."

"And then——" asked Harry, breathlessly.

"The dark stranger, mate, warned us all to leave the boat. There was no luck to stay. We were glad to go. The dark stranger and his friend went away in the yawl. We took the first boat and rowed ashore. We managed to get to New York, and I reckon I'm the only man who hain't shipped."

"Look here, Bob," said Harry, "where was the yacht from?"

"Bless my heart, lad! Don't ye know that?"

"No."

"Sure as my 'davy she was from the Black Key, one of the Tortugas. Captain Page had a plantation on that island. Hang me high, but it was a sorry day we came to New York."

"How did it all happen?"

"Happen?" said the sailor, "It was this way: The skipper's lady wanted to come to New York."

"So he brought her here. We cruised about and got shore leave now and then and had a good time."

"A man on board the boat who was called Merton Steele——"

"Steele!" ejaculated Harry. "Yes, go on."

"We all hated him. He came on a visit to the Key. He came to New York with us on the yacht."

"We were in the sound at anchor when Merton Steele went ashore. When he came back he brought a friend, as he called him. That friend, mate, was the dark stranger. When the skipper's lady saw him she fainted and was carried to her cabin."

"The next thing we knew she was dead. She had killed herself. Then Captain Page quarrelled with the dark stranger. They fought and he was killed."

"Is that all you know about it, Bob?"

The sailor nodded.

"You never knew who the stranger was?"

"Never."

"And he went away with Steele?"

"Yes."

Harry found that this was the extent of the evidence he could procure from Benson. It was of value.

It substantiated the murder and the character of the murderer, if not his identity. This must be learned.

Harry made Benson promise not to ship right away.

He gave him money and ascertained the name of the lodging house where he was stopping.

It seemed as if an entering wedge had been made.

The young detective already began to see the possibility of a satisfactory solution of the case.

He had learned the identity of the murdered man, and his residence. This was a good deal.

CHAPTER V.

THE CASE DEVELOPS.

Harry knew how important it was to keep Benson within easy reach. So he made all necessary arrangements with him.

The young detective then returned to the *Hyacinthe*.

The hour was late, but as he stepped on deck he was met by a tall figure.

"Hello, Harry! What luck?"

It was Old King Brady.

"Is it you, partner?" cried the young detective, cheerily. "Well, I am glad to see you. What luck? Oh! I have an entering wedge."

"You don't mean it."

"Yes, I do."

"Do tell me all about it. I am deeply interested."

The two detectives sank into chairs under the binnacle lamp and lit cigars.

Then Harry told all of his experiences.

Old King Brady listened.

When the young detective had finished he said:

"Well, Harry, I give you credit for some very smart work. You have gained a great deal. How lucky you were to fall in with Benson."

"I would have been, indeed, befogged but for him."

"That is true. We now know who the murdered man was. The woman was his wife. It is now in order to find the murderer and have him punished."

"Yes."

"That will come."

"I think so. By the way, what luck did you have at Mamaroneck?"

Old King Brady yawned.

"Don't speak of it," he said. "You have beaten me. I accomplished nothing. Well, that is, I only got a faint clew. Here it is."

He threw the gloves out upon the table under the binnacle. Harry took them up.

"In what manner do these afford a clew?" he asked.

"They were left behind by the man who departed with Douglas Wild that dark night upon the errand from which he never returned."

"Ah! is that so?" said Harry, with idle interest.

He held the gloves up to the light. Then he turned one of them inside out.

He gave a start.

There was a name marked on the white lining of the glove. It had escaped Old King Brady's eyes.

"What is this?" asked Harry, scrutinizing the name. "M—e—r—ton Steele. What? By the justice!"

The young detective leaped to his feet. He held the glove at arm's length while his eyes gleamed like balls of fire.

"What's the matter?" asked Old King Brady, "are you crazy?"

"You shall see," said the young detective. "Do you see the name in this glove?"

"Yes."

Old King Brady read it.

"What of it?" he asked.

"Read this," said Harry, producing the torn page of memorandum found in the cabin of the yacht. "Do you see the point?"

Old King Brady did so.

Then he also sprang up.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

"I found it in the cabin of this yacht."

For a moment Old King Brady's brain was busily at work.

"By jove! Harry," he said finally, "this connects the two cases."

"Of course it does."

"Merton Steele was a visitor at the home of Douglas Wild, in Mamaroneck. He is supposed to be responsible for Wild's mysterious disappearance."

"Just so."

"He also has been aboard this yacht. Perhaps he was the strange visitor whom Benson told about. Perhaps—he is a double murderer."

The detectives gazed silently at each other for some time.

Finally Harry said:

"I am glad."

"Of what?"

"That the two cases are merged and we shall work together."

"Well, so am I," declared Old King Brady. "I believe that the solution of one case will afford the solution of the other."

"So do I."

"Now it looks to me as if all had simmered down to one point. That is, the discovery of Merton Steele."

"He is the villain who can explain the murder of Hugo Page and throw light upon the whereabouts of Douglas Wild."

"Exactly."

"The question now arises: How are we to find him?"

"Well, that is our problem," said Old King Brady. "Hello! I have an idea."

"What?"

"Merton Steele had a purpose in such a wholesale murder."

"Certainly."

"Why might it not be related to the rich plantation

home of Hugo Page at Black Key. I believe we will find the scoundrel there."

"In that event——"

"We have the yacht. We might take a cruise down there."

"Capital!" cried Harry. "I will employ Benson as one of the crew. He will pilot us to Black Key."

"There is no doubt that Steele has gone there."

"Perhaps to usurp the title and wealth of Page, now that he has murdered him."

"Exactly! We are getting into the case all right, now."

This was true.

What had in the first place been but a fog of mystery, now seemed rapidly clearing.

All was becoming as bright as if exposed to the noonday sun.

It is needless to say that the two detectives were elated.

They paced the deck of the *Hyacinthe* until a late hour.

Then they retired and slept soundly until morning. The next day the detectives went to the coroner's and also to Headquarters.

They did not reveal to the authorities all they had learned.

But they represented the necessity of employing the yacht upon a cruise. There was no trouble in arranging all.

"I will make the cruise on my own responsibility," said Old King Brady. "There need be no concern about that."

Permission was given the detectives to employ the yacht in any way they might see fit.

Then the detectives hunted up Benson.

They found him in his room at his lodgings.

"Now, Benson," said Harry, "we understand that you are working with us and are in our employ."

"All right, skipper," agreed Benson, with a bow and scrape.

"Then you swear to be loyal to us."

"I do."

"You will assist to track down Steele and his unknown companion?"

"Yes," agreed the sailor.

"That is all right, then. You know where Black Key is?"

"Like a book, sir."

"Very good! We are going to take the *Hyacinthe* and go there. Will you act as pilot?"

Benson was delighted.

"Oh! I will do anything, mates, to avenge the death of Captain Page," he declared. "He was my best friend."

"We feel sure of your sincerity."

"You can, sir."

"Well, we will make you captain of the *Hyacinthe*. There is a full crew aboard."

Benson was overwhelmed.

He made all manner of protestations of good faith. The detectives were satisfied.

"It is all right," said Old King Brady, "we will prepare at once for the cruise."

"I will come aboard with my kit at once, sir," declared Benson.

"Very well."

The Bradys now took their departure. They hastily made all preparations for the yachting trip.

It was their first case of the kind. It was to be a case on sea and shore. But the Bradys were always "on deck."

Before night the *Hyacinthe* was fully equipped for the cruise.

Other detectives who had been working on the case wondered what new clew the two detectives had struck.

It was a matter of mystery to them. They had been baffled from the start.

Many of them believed it a colossal bluff on the part of the Bradys.

But this was all they could gain.

The detectives kept the matter absolutely secret and when the *Hyacinthe* dropped out of the harbor the next morning her destination was a profound secret.

Out to sea the little yacht put.

She was staunch and seaworthy and a splendid sailer. But it was fourteen days before she reached the Tortugas.

Then, in tropical seas, she was the victim of calms. But finally, among the many beautiful islands, one was sighted which Benson declared to be the Black Key.

"We have made it," he said. "But for the doldrums we'd have been in two days earlier."

The little yacht drew near to the island.

It was the largest of four similar islands or keys as they were called.

Only one of these was inhabited, however, and that was Black Key.

As the *Hyacinthe* drew nearer, however, Benson said:

"There is the flag waving. Somebody is on the island. See, there is a yacht in the bay."

This was true.

A yacht of about the build of the *Hyacinthe* was anchored off the landing.

Men were seen upon the wharf and it was plain that the *Hyacinthe* was seen.

"Those are the coolies," said Benson. "Perhaps that shark Steele has got them in charge. In that case, we will have trouble in landing."

"We will find out," declared Old King Brady, grimly.

The *Hyacinthe* was held down for the pier.

As she ran nearer, the figures of the coolies could be plainly seen.

The plantation houses were visible beyond and even the orange and banana groves could be distinguished.

But as the yacht drew nearer a flag was run up a staff. On it could be deciphered an inscription:

"Keep off!"

Then those on board the *Hyacinthe* saw that the coolies were all armed with rifles.

The detectives were astonished.

"Whew!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "Here is a fine go. It looks like a civil war."

"Do you think they'll resist us if we try to land?" asked Harry.

"Of course they will," declared Bob Benson. "I tell you, mates, ye'll have to bring one of Uncle Sam's warships down here to capture this place."

Indeed, it looked so.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DETECTIVES ON DECK.

Benson held the helm.

"What shall we do, skipper?" he asked of Old King Brady. "They may fire upon us if we go nearer."

"Let them fire," said the old detective, resolutely. "I'm going up there just the same."

"All right, sir."

So Benson held the *Hyacinthe* in toward the wharf. When within hailing distance he brought her up.

A hail came from the shore.

"Yacht ahoy!"

"Ahoy the wharf!" shouted Benson.

"What craft is that?"

"The *Hyacinthe*! Captain Page's boat."

"Who's on board?"

"Friends from New York."

"Well, Captain Page is dead and other parties own this island now. Keep off!"

Benson looked at the detectives.

"What did I tell ye, mates?" he said. "It is Steele and he has taken possession of, or rather stolen the island."

"Very good," said Old King Brady, grimly. "He is within our reach now."

But the sailor was dubious.

"I don't know," he said. "Ye can't depend on that. He has got the plantation hands under his thumb and we can't fight the whole lot of 'em."

The two detectives saw the point.

There were ten on board the yacht. There were probably a hundred plantation hands on the island.

It could be seen at once that the disparity of numbers precluded anything like direct attack.

Old King Brady went to the rail and made a trumpet of his hands.

"Ahoy the island!" he shouted

"Ahoy the yacht!" came back.

"Is there a man among you named Merton Steele?"

There was a long silence.

Then the reply came back:

"Who are you, and what do you want of Steele?"

"We have something important to tell him. Let him come out here in a row-boat and we will tell it."

A sort of discussion seemed to be held on the wharf.

Then the answer came back:

"Mr. Steele will not come out. He will meet you here."

The detectives exchanged glances.

"What do you think?" asked Old King Brady. "Is it safe?"

"I tell ye, mates," said Benson, excitedly, "if ye go ashore ye'll never come back!"

"Well, so I think," said Harry. "I believe they would trap us."

"Well, we cannot afford that," declared Old King Brady.

"But what shall we do?"

"There seems but one plan."

"What?"

"Let us draw off and wait for a safe opportunity to land unseen after dark."

"Done!" cried Harry. "That is the best thing we can do!"

So it was decided.

The yacht drew away.

"Ahoy the yacht! Where are ye going?"

"To Cuba!" replied the quick-witted Benson. "You won't take our message so ye can get along without it."

"Come ashore with it."

"Come out and get it."

"Our chief don't believe you. He thinks you are pirates."

"Well, let him think so. If he wants the message he can come out for it."

But no answer came back. The detectives would have been delighted could they have drawn Steele out to the yacht.

He would have become a prisoner in less time than it takes to tell it. But the villain was too wary.

So the *Hyacinthe* dropped out to sea and soon was but a speck on the horizon.

But just as soon as darkness came she again stood in for the isle.

The detectives were determined to, if possible, make a landing on the island that night.

It chanced to be a dark night without moon or stars.

A south wind impregnated with mist came drifting over the sea.

The *Hyacinthe* cautiously ran up under the lee of the island.

Then the anchor was dropped as noiselessly as possible. The hour was about eleven.

The twinkling lights of the plantation buildings could be seen through the trees. A consultation was held.

"What shall we do?" asked Benson. "Of course ye want to go ashore."

"That is our desire," replied Old King Brady. "But I think myself that we must use great caution."

"Indeed, sir, that is true."

"If we row carefully ashore——"

"Dash me! Ye don't mean to do that, do ye?"

Old King Brady was astonished.

"Eh?" he exclaimed. "What else can we do?"

"Pshaw! Ye never can land on that shore from a boat."

"Don't ye think so?"

"Never!"

"Why not?"

"Well, it's easy enough to see. A clever fox is that Steele. He will have armed guards all along the shore."

Old King Brady had thought of this as a possibility.

The positive manner and words of Benson only verified it. So he said:

"Well, I daresay you are right, but how else can we land?"

"Just drop down into the water and swim," replied Benson.

"Swim?"

"Yes, the water is warm."

"But how about sharks?"

"Pshaw! There is no danger at night."

"It counts me out," said Old King Brady.

"Why?"

"I cannot swim!"

Benson gave vent to a long whistle.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "You don't mean it."

"It is true."

The sailor was thoughtful a moment. Then he shook his head.

"Well," he said, thoughtfully, "I see no way but for some of us to float you ashore. I'll guarantee to hold you up most of the way. But it ain't no use trying to get ashore in a boat. It can't be done!"

Old King Brady was skeptical.

"I don't see why," he ventured. "We ought to be able to steal silently into some dark cove. At least if we got into shallow water we could wade."

Benson shook his head, but he could not be obdurate.

"Well," he said finally, "you are the skipper and it's for us to obey orders. If you say so, here goes."

"I believe we'll try it."

Accordingly orders were given to the crew and the boat was put out.

Harry and Old King Brady sat forward. Two of the sailors rowed and Benson in the stern did the steering.

Silently the oar blades were dipped and the boat glided in nearer the shore.

Very slowly and very cautiously they approached the beach.

Now its dark outlines could be seen. Suddenly the nerves of all grew tense. Benson turned the rudder short about.

From the stillness of the shore came a voice:

"All right on your end, Jim?"

"All right, Bill. Powerful dark, eh?"

"You bet! I wish I was out of this."

"So do I! Hello! Is that a shadow out there?"

The silence which followed was intense. It was a thrilling moment.

Not one in the boat moved a muscle. They sat motionless. They knew the danger they were in.

Every moment they expected to hear the report of a rifle. Why the guards did not fire was a mystery.

Only the dense shadows saved those in the boat.

"Bah! I don't see anything, Bill."

"Well, then I'm rattled. I say, how do you like the outlook?"

"I think it may be all right if Steele only does as he agrees."

"Well, will he not?"

"I don't know. There's one thing sure, we are all on an island, and if he don't use us square we can jump on him."

"That's right."

"Have a chew, Bill?"

"Thanks!"

The receding footsteps of the guards were heard. Then silently Benson's men dipped their oars.

The boat glided a bit nearer the island. But suddenly the rattle of pebbles on the beach caused Benson to again bring the boat about.

A harsh voice cried:

"Ahoy there! What craft is that?"

Those in the boat again became motionless. The boat drifted slowly out into the darkness.

The detectives were sure this time that all was lost.

The click of the rifle hammer was plainly heard. But the shot was never fired.

"Hello, Bill! What did ye see?"

"I was dead sure I saw a boat!"

"Pshaw! it's driftwood and it's fooled me several times."

"Do ye believe it?"

"I know it."

"Well, I'm going to keep my eye out. The next time I see it I'll fire."

Old King Brady was satisfied.

"All right," he whispered to Benson. "I can see that you are right. Give it up! Let us go back to the yacht."

Softly the boat was rowed back to the yacht.

Once aboard, Old King Brady said:

"I am convinced that Mr. Benson's ideas are correct. It is our only way to reach the island."

"Well," agreed Harry, "I am of the same opinion. Will you allow us to swim with you?"

"No," replied the old detective. "I will remain aboard the yacht. You may go ashore and do what you can. I will stay here."

So it was decided. Harry with Benson would swim ashore and make a tour of investigation.

Old King Brady would remain aboard the yacht.

Preparations were quickly made. The young detective and the sailor stripped and tied their clothes in a bundle upon their shoulders.

Then they dropped over the yacht's rail and into the water.

Noiselessly they swam away into the mist. Soon they heard the gentle swish of the sea upon the sands of the cove.

They swam silently on and crawled on hands and knees across the beach. Under the shadow of the cliff they paused to rest.

Just then they heard footsteps.

A dark figure went silently past. They had just escaped the guard.

It taught them one thing. The island was well guarded.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE ISLAND.

"We're in luck, Mr. Brady," whispered Benson. "I knew we'd give 'em the slip. But I tell you they're well skeered."

"That's right," agreed Harry. "Well, let us get away from here."

Quickly they donned their clothes. Then they crept up over the cliff. The island was before them.

Harry led the way and they crept through the tropical growth until the plantation was reached.

The place was surrounded by a high palisade of palm trunks. In this there were gates.

A road led down to the wharf, and at intervals lanterns hung to posts illuminated the way.

Dark figures were lounging at these gates, so that Harry saw it was out of the question to attempt to gain admittance that way.

He made his way with Benson along the palisade for a ways. There he whispered:

"As you're a sailor, Benson, you ought to be a good climber. Can't you make that palisade?"

"Aye, mate," replied Benson. "Just as easy as I can splice a main brace. Here goes!"

The sailor went over the palisade like a cat.

Harry was a good climber himself and quickly followed him.

They were both now inside the plantation grounds. The lights of the buildings could be seen in the distance.

Very cautiously they proceeded now.

As they drew near the main building they saw a broad piazza lit with lamps. On this three men sat at a table.

They appeared to be throwing dice. Their laughter and conversation reached the ears of Harry and Benson.

Suddenly the dice were thrown down and one of them went into the house. The other two came down the steps.

Harry and the sailor were crouched in the bushes and could hear every word spoken.

"I tell you, Steele, there is no place in the world where a man can be safe."

"That may be true, but you ought to feel safe."

"Remember, I am Don Luis Rivera henceforth. All depends upon our shrewdness and the exercise of care."

"One question."

"Well?"

"What am I to get out of this job?"

"What do you want?"

"This island!"

"It is yours!"

"Good! Then I am content," said Steele with a chuckling laugh. "You are sure Page had no heir?"

"None whatever! He was an orphan whose parentage was unknown. As his wife died with him there is no heir."

"That is all right then," declared Steele. "It will be

easy enough to show bogus papers of sale. I know Page's signature and I can forge it."

"Very good! I wish you luck. The world is opening bright to you. But to me——"

"Well, what?"

"I can see nothing! I am a fugitive branded and hunted by the law. I am a murderer!"

"Bah! What does that amount to? You have money and brains. The world is wide."

"Steele, you do not understand. You never can, for you are not so constituted. But I can never recover from that fearful blow inflicted so many years ago."

"You have had your revenge."

"Aye, but it has been tempered with terrible suffering of mind."

"Well, I have decided my future. I shall remain on this island the rest of my natural life."

"I shall wish you luck. But will you always be safe here?"

"Why not?"

"Well, you know that detectives in New York are doing great work."

"You mean the Bradys."

"Yes."

"Pshaw! I'll fool them. Just let them show their heads down this way."

Benson chuckled and nudged Harry.

"I don't know. They have possession of the *Hyacinthe*. You say the yacht appeared off the island to-day?"

"Yes."

Don Luis Rivera whistled softly. He shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Well, it's two to one those detectives were on board her."

Steele gave an exclamation.

"Do you think so?" he asked.

"I think the chances are that they were."

"Well, they have gone. They did not gain anything."

"Don't you be too sure. There is yet a good chance for them to return."

"To return?"

"Yes."

It was plain that Steele was nervous.

"Well," he sneered, "what if they do? They'll have to bring a war-ship in order to take this island."

"Well, I wish you luck. You are to take me to Tampa aboard the *Swallow*."

"That's the agreement. Where will you go from there?"

"I think I shall get passage on a steamer to Havana, and eventually get down to Barbadoes. Thence I shall manage to sail for Brazil."

"I wish you success."

"Thank you."

"Then you will never show up in the United States again?"

"Never!"

"And your property?"

A mocking laugh ensued.

"My property," said Don Luis, "is all right. I fixed it so that little will be left for my creditors."

"You don't carry it on your person?"

"I fear it would be a good load to carry on my person. But come, let us go back to the house. We will be missed."

"One word."

"Well?"

"When do you wish to sail?"

"As early as possible in the morning."

"Very well. The Swallow will be ready at sunrise. It may be a slow passage for the seas are calm."

"I don't care for that. I wish I could pass the rest of my life on the water."

With this both sauntered toward the house. The conversation was an entire revelation to Harry.

He understood all now, perfectly well.

He knew that Don Luis Rivera was the stranger who boarded the yacht with Steele and who murdered Hugo Page.

There was no doubt that he was also the murderer of Douglas Wild, to Harry's mind. The young detective realized that he had made very important discoveries.

If the Swallow was to sail with Rivera for Tampa, it looked an easy matter for the Hyacinthe to give chase.

As the Hyacinthe was a larger boat she should be faster and ought to overtake the Swallow.

"Well, Bob," whispered Harry, "I don't see but that we have gained all we can here. I think we might as well return to the yacht."

"All right, skipper," agreed the sailor. "You are the boss."

"We know the state of affairs on this island completely. We need look for nothing more."

"Ayé, aye, sir."

Harry turned to make his way back to the point where they had scaled the palisade. But even as he turned, he heard a guttural exclamation and saw shadowy forms closing in on him.

Benson gave a sharp cry:

"Quick, lad!" he cried. "This way!"

But Harry was too late. Half a dozen of the coolies were upon him. He made a brave fight.

But he was overpowered.

Benson, who was a powerful fellow, had broken through the line of foes and was being pursued across the plantation.

But Harry was a prisoner.

The young detective knew that his position was critical. If he was recognized, death would be his portion.

But his quick wit came to his aid.

As he was confronted by a powerful-framed man who had directed the coolies, he blurted out in brogue:

"Bad luck to yez for thryin' to shut me wind. Shure I'm nothin' but a poor Irish lad an' no harrum done."

"Irish, are ye?" exclaimed the leader of the coolies, "well, what brought ye to this 'ere island?"

"Shure me frind an' meself were shipwrecked on wan of these bloody islands, and shure we've swum from wan to the other until we come here. Bad luck to it."

"Hold the lantern up here one of ye till I see his face." The light was flashed in Harry's face. For a moment he was blinded.

A curse escaped the overseer's lips. For that he was an overseer there was no doubt.

"He's no more an Irishman than I am!" he cried. "We'll take him up to headquarters."

Harry saw that he was in for it.

But he never lost his nerve.

"Take me where yez will," he said. "I'm only Dennis O'Heelan. That's all yez kin make of it."

"All right, Irish," said the overseer. "We'll soon find out how true your story is."

Harry was led away by his captors. In a few moments they had reached the house.

Steele stood on the steps as they came up.

"What's this?" he cried.

"We have captured an interloper," said the overseer. "He pretends to be an Irishman, but I am not sure."

"Eh?" exclaimed the villain, peering into Harry's face. "Where did you find him?"

The overseer explained. Steele gritted his teeth and said:

"Very likely he came ashore from that cursed yacht."

"That's what I think, sir," agreed the overseer.

"Well, you know what to do with him. Put him in the Black Hole for to-night."

"Shure, sor, won't yez have pity on a poor Irish lad what never did anybody no harm?" pleaded Harry.

"Dry up, you sneak!" cried Steele, savagely. "Do you hear what I say? Take him away."

So Harry was led away.

Far back of the plantation buildings was a shanty with iron-barred windows. Beneath this was a deep cellar which was damp and totally dark.

Into this, through a trap door, the young detective was forced.

He was an absolute captive.

Escape seemed impossible.

His hands were left free, however, and for this he was thankful. In the noisome pestilential Black Hole he was left to his fate.

The stone walls of his prison were on four sides of him. Above was the planking of the floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARRY'S ADVENTURE.

Certainly the young detective's position was not an enviable one.

Escape seemed impossible.

Moisture dripped from the walls of the cell. He could see absolutely nothing.

There was no way of sitting down or reclining save upon the damp floor.

Altogether Harry was in a miserable predicament. But he was too plucky to give up to it.

He was determined to make his escape if such a thing was at all possible. He was clever and shrewd and at once set his wits to work.

He remembered that his captors had not searched his pockets.

This was in his favor.

He had a small pocket lantern which he now quickly produced.

He lit it and flashed its rays around the cell.

He saw that the trap door was smaller than the top of the well.

Its rusty hinges were almost within reach. The young detective carefully examined the trap.

He listened and could hear no sound above.

This satisfied him that his captors had left the place, deeming him too securely confined for escape.

The young detective smiled grimly.

"I'll fool them," he muttered.

Then he proceeded to examine the stone walls of the cell.

He found that some of those at the top near the trap were loose and could not doubt be dislodged.

This was enough for him.

Harry at once began work.

His pocket lamp was good to burn several hours yet, so he placed it in a niche in the wall.

Then he climbed with some difficulty upward by placing his feet in the niches between the stones.

Up he went slowly but surely.

In a short while he was able to put up his hand and grasp one of the rocks of the upper layer.

This was loose.

He shook it for a few moments and then it rolled over and fell into the bottom of the well.

Harry slid back, but luckily was not hurt.

He rolled the stone up against the wall and used it as a step. Again he climbed slowly upward.

Another stone came tumbling down.

By placing this upon the other, Harry had secured foothold and could work with safety.

Thus he dislodged stone after stone until there was a great pile in the center of the well.

He was now able to reach the trap by standing on these.

All this might have taken an hour.

Harry in dislodging the stones had also brought down a lot of earth from around the mouth of the well.

This exposed more of the flooring and gave the young detective an idea.

If he could get a foothold between the flooring and the edge of the well he might dig his way out through the sandy soil.

First, however, he made sure that the trap could not be raised.

Satisfied of this, he pulled down more of the stones and earth. His lantern now gave signs of going out.

Harry knew that all depended upon quick work.

If his captors should chance to return in the meantime all would be lost.

Higher grew the pile of earth and stones. Harry now began to dig away a passage beneath the flooring.

It was not difficult.

He knew that it would eventually bring him out into the open air. This meant liberty.

He worked swiftly and strongly. Soon the aperture had grown until he felt sure the end could not be far away.

Presently he broke through and a whiff of fresh air reached his nostrils.

Then his blood grew chill.

He heard voices.

They came from a point outside the shanty. Somebody was approaching the place.

Harry realized that there was no time to lose.

If caught now his fate would be assured. It meant death.

He waited in terrible suspense while the voices drew nearer.

Every moment now was of value. Yet he dared not move. Now he could distinguish the words:

"So you think you have on of the foxes, do you, Merton?"

"Yes, I do."

"What makes you think he is a detective?"

"Well, when he was overpowered in the garden this badge was torn from his vest by one of the coolies. It is the star of a Secret Service detective."

"Whew! Is he a young man?"

"Yes."

"I'll wager it is young King Brady."

"Perhaps so."

"If so, we've made a lucky catch."

"I hope it is him."

"So do I."

The two men, whom Harry knew to be Steele and the Spaniard, Don Luis Rivera, entered the shanty.

The rattle of a padlock was heard and then the creaking of hinges.

"Hold the light nearer, Luis."

"All right."

"Well, my fine fox, how do you like your den? Heigh! the fiends! What has happened?"

Curses filled the air.

"Why, the place has caved in and buried him up, Merton."

"It can't be so!" protested Steele. "It looks to me as if he had burrowed out like a rat."

Harry had all this while enlarged the opening under the shanty and now crawled into the open air.

He lost no time.

With all speed he ran through the fields of the plantation.

He had a vague idea as to where the point in the palisade was. He made for it.

He heard loud shouts of alarm behind him.

Then the deep baying of dogs came to his ears.

It filled his breast with terror.

He knew that he must hasten or all would be lost. If

the dogs got upon his track there would be virtually no help for him.

On he ran with all his might.

The palisade now loomed up.

But at this point he found that it was too high for him to scale.

He turned and followed its course swiftly. This brought him once more on a line with the house.

And now he saw with apprehension that he had taken the wrong course and was upon the opposite side of the plantation from the point where he had entered.

He heard the baying of the dogs and knew that they were being put upon his scent.

What was to be done?"

In order to reach the shore at the point where he had landed with Benson it was necessary to go down to the beach and cross the landing.

There were guards there, so Harry saw that this was out of the question.

But time was passing.

Every moment meant perhaps life.

So he made a sudden decision.

Down along the palisade he ran until he reached the cliff.

He flung himself over and reached the beach below.

The short, sharp yelps of the pursuing dogs were just above him.

Without a moment's hesitation Harry plunged into the ocean.

He was a strong swimmer.

Out into the surf he swam and soon got beyond the line of reefs. He knew the risk he was taking, for these waters were full of sharks.

But he remembered Benson's assertion that they would do him no harm in the darkness.

On swam the young detective.

He could hear the dogs barking and the sound of voices on the shore.

Suddenly a dark object loomed up before him.

He experienced a thrill. It was a yacht of about the build of the *Hyacinthe*.

It rocked at anchor in the darkness. Not a light was visible nor did there seem to be anybody aboard her.

Harry reckoned that this craft was the *Swallow*, of which he had heard Steele speak. Curiosity impelled him to swim close under her stern.

He hung there for some time, listening intently.

He was impelled by a powerful desire to see what was aboard this yacht. He allowed himself to drift along her side.

Something rushed up through the water and scraped his leg. He felt a stinging sensation in the calf of his leg.

A heavy body forced him against the yacht's hull.

He grasped a trailing rope and hung to it.

He knew what had happened.

It gave him a chill of horror.

A shark had made a rush at him and missed him by a close margin.

Another rush might mean capture. He did not wait for it.

Better capture by anyone aboard the yacht than to be eaten by sharks.

Harry swung himself up hand over hand.

In a few seconds he reached the yacht's rail.

He swung himself over and stood on her forward deck. All was darkness and silence.

He could see nothing of any living person aboard the craft.

What did it mean?

But there was no time to lose in idle speculation. At any moment some one might come upon him.

Harry leaned over the rail and listened. Then he looked down at the water.

The water was bubbling and agitated by a number of huge bodies. He knew it would be suicide to go down there.

He must remain aboard the yacht at any cost.

It was a hazardous outlook.

But the young detective leaned over the anchor chains and saw a small port-hole which led into that part of the craft known on a ship of the olden type as the lazaret.

Harry swung down and crawled into the port-hole.

He found that it was a storage place for the spare anchor chains and had probably been left open by mistake.

He closed it all but a slender crevice. For a time he lay there feeling quite secure.

Then he fell asleep.

When he awoke it was broad daylight and to his surprise the vessel was in motion.

CHAPTER IX.

A STERN CHASE.

Benson, in his flight for the palisade, never suspected for a moment but that Harry had also made his escape, else he would have remained to assist him.

But when he cleared the palisade and found that the young detective was not with him, he halted.

It was too late, however.

Harry was a prisoner.

Appalled by the misfortune the brave sailor thought of returning for his companion. But second thought showed the folly of such a move.

There was nothing left for him but to make good his own escape.

This he proceeded to do.

He reached the beach hotly pursued by the foe.

He plunged in and swam for the *Hyacinthe*.

Shots were sent after him, but luckily none hit him.

He reached the *Hyacinthe* completely exhausted and was pulled aboard.

"What is this?" cried Old King Brady, in amazement. "Where is Harry?"

"I do not know," replied Benson. "But I fear he has been captured by the foe."

With this the sailor told his story.

Old King Brady was frantic.

"He must be rescued," he declared. "I must go ashore myself."

"That is impossible," replied Benson. "But I will return."

With which he plunged over the yacht's rail before anyone could stop him and swam away.

This time Bob landed near the wharf.

Here he skulked about for hours and finally learned the truth of Harry's fate by overhearing some of the plantation hands.

Benson tried his best to find the "Black Hole."

But he was unable to do this.

However, he was near when Harry made his escape and heard all the details. Then he launched himself into the surf and swam out to find the young detective.

But he might as well have spared himself the trouble.

After a long time a dark object loomed up before him. It was the Hyacinthe.

He climbed aboard and told his story.

"I make free to believe that it's all up with the young detective," said Benson. "It's even money that the sharks got him or he was drowned."

Row-boats put out and made a circuit of the island. Everything was done to find the young detective.

Then he was given up.

Old King Brady was smitten with grief.

But he was determined to be revenged upon the villains. They should pay well for the young detective's loss.

The Hyacinthe now shifted her position behind one of the islands.

Here she was when daylight came. Then those on her deck saw that something was going on at the island wharf.

It did not take long to discover that the Swallow was getting ready to put to sea.

Benson remembered hearing that Rivera was to leave by her for Tampa. Old King Brady at once decided to give chase.

"Let them get well away from the island," he said, "then we'll overhaul them."

The Swallow stood out to sea under full sail.

It was at this juncture that Harry in his hiding place awoke, as we have seen.

The Hyacinthe was a large boat and there was no reason why she should not overhaul the Swallow.

At the right moment Old King Brady cried:

"All right, Benson! Give chase!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

The Hyacinthe's crew sprang to work and soon had the canvas spread.

The yacht started out in pursuit and loud yells were heard from the island wharf.

The Hyacinthe was seen and all was understood.

It was likely that Steele, unable now to get off the island, was interested as well as alarmed.

The Swallow was sailing like a bird far out toward the horizon.

There was little delay in getting the Hyacinthe under way. Yet the other yacht got a big start.

A stern chase it is said—truly—is a long one.

The island soon dropped below the horizon so swiftly did the two yachts sail. It was very plain that the Hyacinthe was gaining.

But it was slow. The Swallow proved a good sailor. The chase settled down now into a steady pull.

Old King Brady paced the deck.

He was satisfied.

"At any rate," he said, "we shall catch her before she gets to Tampa. There is no danger of that!"

"Unless she slips us in the night," put in Benson.

"That is so! We must overtake her before night, if possible."

Both yachts had every yard of canvas stretched. There was a good breeze and the race was interesting.

Step by step the Hyacinthe pulled up on the Swallow.

But suddenly an unlooked-for thing occurred.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. From the south and west a dim haze began to steal across the sea.

Then the wind went down.

There was a dead calm.

Those on board the Hyacinthe had the satisfaction of knowing that the Swallow was as badly handicapped as themselves.

So all that could be done was to wait for a change.

"I hope the doldrum lasts all night," said Benson. "If it does, they can't get away from us."

"That is true," agreed Old King Brady. "But I fear we'll not have such good luck as that."

"I fear the same."

But the hours passed and yet the sea hung in a calm.

Then an idea occurred to the old detective.

The mist was very dense and darkness was not far away. There was hardly two miles between the drifting yachts.

"I think we can make a big move," said Old King Brady, "if we act with caution. What do you think of sending out a boat to try and reach the Swallow. If she is approached carefully I think we ought to be able to surprise the crew."

But Benson looked at the sky and shook his head.

"This fog will last twelve hours yet, skipper," he said. "There ain't no use tempting fate."

"How?"

"Why, the boat will simply get lost in the fog."

"You think so?"

"I do."

"Don't you think a compass course could be rowed for two miles?"

"It might and it might not. We can't see the Swallow to get a line on her. I think we would miss her."

But Old King Brady would not yield to this objection.

He continued:

"I am willing to risk it myself. I believe we can do it and we need not lose the Hyacinthe either."

"How is that, skipper?" asked Bob.

"We have plenty of small line on board, have we not?"

"Yes."

"Simply take along a lot of it and pay it out over the stern of the boat. By this means we have sure communication with you."

Benson's face brightened.

"That might do," he declared. "Yes, I'm in favor of that."

"Then it's a go!"

All the sennit line on board the yacht was brought up on deck. There were balls enough of it to extend a distance of five miles.

A small windlass was rigged in the stern of the row-boat. One end of the line was fastened to the bowsprit of the Hyacinthe.

Then Old King Brady selected five of the crew.

It was deemed best for Benson to remain with the Hyacinthe.

The men were all armed and understood their business. They were ready to fight if need be.

Then the boat was lowered and the little party entered it.

Old King Brady's hope of success lay in the possibility of creeping unseen aboard the Swallow and surprising the crew.

Taken unawares they would not be apt to make much of a resistance. It would be a grand coup.

The plans were well laid and it seemed indeed possible that they might succeed.

The old detective and his men rowed away into the fog.

Old King Brady held the compass and kept the course straight.

For a long while they rowed on silently. The detective kept a close watch out ahead.

He looked for the hull of the yacht to show through the mist at any time.

And suddenly a dark object loomed up in the distance.

He scanned it closely.

He became assured that it was the yacht.

He whispered to his men at the oars and they slightly changed their course. But just at that moment a thrilling thing happened.

A tremendous shriek came through the fog and the next instant there bore down upon the row-boat a monster with flaring lights and leviathan appearance.

There was no time to lose.

The men bent to the oars.

Just in time they passed the quarter of the steamer. Then a fearful, thrilling crash followed.

The steamer had struck the yacht.

The Swallow went over on its side and drifted to leeward a hopeless, sinking wreck.

As for the steamer, it kept right on. Its pilot had no time to inquire into a collision with a sail-boat.

"My soul!" cried Old King Brady. "Everybody on board the yacht will be drowned. Quick, boys, pull thither."

"I say, skipper," said one of the men, "we've broken our connections."

"Eh?" asked Old King Brady.

"The line is cut."

This was true.

The line of communication with the Hyacinthe was gone. The steamer had cut right through it.

This was a fearful, demoralizing reflection. The superstitious sailors all gave a groan.

CHAPTER X.

ADRIFT IN THE FOG.

To sailors of their type there could have been no more significant mishap. They were certain that the end of all was nigh.

Some of them began to mutter and one rested on his oar. But Old King Brady laid his revolver across his knee and said very grimly:

"Pull!"

The sailors reluctantly gave way at the oars.

The boat glided toward the sinking yacht.

But just at that moment a boat was seen to shoot away from the wreck.

It was crowded with the crew of the Swallow.

One man stood in the bow and gave orders. It was Don Luis Rivera.

Old King Brady made a trumpet of his hands and shouted:

"Ahoy the boat!"

"Ahoy!"

"What boat are you?"

"The Swallow, just run down by a steamer. Are you from the steamer to pick us up?"

"No," replied Old King Brady. "We were nearly run down by the steamer and we want to come closer."

"Who are you?"

"Castaways."

There was silence.

It was evident that suspicion had been aroused, for the answer came curtly back:

"We haven't any time for talk. Go your way and we'll go ours!"

"Hold on!" cried Old King Brady, "we want to speak with you."

But the Swallow's boat glided away into the fog.

It was out of sight instantly.

"Pull after them!" cried Old King Brady, quickly. "Don't let them get away."

The sailors bent to execute the order, but just then a cry came from the wreck of the Swallow:

"Ahoy the boat! Give me help or I will drown!"

"Put about, boys," cried Old King Brady, quickly. "Somebody is in trouble."

The boat glided alongside the wreck.

"Ahoy there!" cried the old detective. "where are you, castaway?"

A cry of joy and recognition came from the wreck.

"Hello, partner! Don't you know me? How came you here?"

"Harry!" gasped the old detective. "Can I believe my senses?"

"That's who it is!"

"What brought you here?"

"Help me out of this wreck and I'll tell you."

The boat glided nearer. Then Harry was seen hanging out of the port-hole where we left him at the close of the preceding chapter.

The young detective had kept dark after the discovery that the yacht had started.

He was not altogether displeased with the situation.

He saw the possibility of great work. When Tampa was reached it would be an easy matter to have Rivera arrested.

Then he had it planned to return at once to the island of Black Key with a larger vessel and a force of men large enough to carry the island.

In a few moments Harry was safe in the row-boat.

Then he told his story.

It was listened to with deepest interest. Old King Brady was thrilled.

"By jove! Harry," he exclaimed, "you certainly did well. You are entitled to great praise."

"It is too bad for Rivera to escape now."

"Indeed, that is so, but I see no way to prevent it."

"Nor do I. It would be impossible to catch him in the fog."

"Indeed, yes! Our only plan is to return to the Hyacinthe and wait for the fog to lift."

"That is true, but I see no sign of its lifting. Meanwhile they can row a good ways in a day and there is the chance that they will be picked up by a passing steamer."

"That is so," agreed Old King Brady. "But our predicament is scarcely less serious. How shall we find the Hyacinthe?"

This was true.

To attempt to locate the Hyacinthe in the fog and darkness seemed utterly useless. Yet she was hardly two miles away.

However, the detectives decided to make the attempt.

So as nearly as possible a course was set to bring them within hailing distance of the yacht.

The crew set to work at the oars and pulled away into the fog.

The detectives listened and at times shouted. But no answer came back nor did they find the Hyacinthe.

Finally one of the sailors said:

"Skipper, there's a dead calm on the sea. The yacht ain't likely to drift no faster nor we are. I reckon we'd better not pull too far away."

Old King Brady saw the logic of this at once.

Certainly nothing was to be gained by rowing aimlessly around in the fog.

So he said:

"My man, you're right. We'll let it go at that. We'll wait for daylight."

With this decision the sailors rested on their oars.

That night in the fog in an open boat the detectives never forgot.

The hours seemed days.

At times they shouted, hoping to hear from the Hyacinthe. But it was all in vain.

Finally the darkness began to fade, but the fog yet hung upon the sea.

The long morning hours were unrelieved by any signs of its lifting.

The sailors grew extremely uneasy.

"There's likely to be a blow after a fog like this," said one of them. "There's no luck in this anyway."

But nothing more could be done than wait and hope.

Finally the fog began to slowly lift. The blue sky showed overhead.

Then the mist rose in great patches from the face of the sea. A light breeze rippled the waters.

And every eye was strained to catch the first glimpse of the yacht.

It was a period of suspense.

Now the horizon could be seen to the north. Gradually the mist rolled away at the south and east.

A deep, shuddering breath welled up from the breast of each person in the boat. The Hyacinthe was not to be seen.

Old King Brady arose and said:

"Bend to the oars, men. I will set a course back to the Tortugas."

For a moment mutiny showed in the faces of the sailors. They sat inactive.

One of them said, threateningly:

"There's a Jonah in this boat, boys. Overboard with him. We'll have no luck until he goes over!"

Old King Brady's hands were raised.

In each was a revolver.

"Steady there," he said, sternly. "You are to understand that I am master here. The first mutineer dies!"

This had the desired effect.

The sailors cowered before the revolver muzzles. Slowly and sullenly they bent to their oars.

Old King Brady set the course as well as he could for the islands.

He knew it was a long ways.

To row back there might mean at least two days of hard work.

There was no food or drink in the boat. When they should reach the islands it might be only to run into the hands of Steele and his men.

The situation was growing desperate.

For two hours they rowed on.

Then the sea began to grow choppy.

From the east a strong breeze set in and it became impossible to row against it.

Old King Brady and Harry saw that they were in desperate straits.

The light boat could not live in a much heavier sea.

Death stared them in the face.

The sailors momentarily grew more restless. Only the revolvers restrained them.

Thus far not a sign of a sail had been seen anywhere on the horizon.

Now, however, Old King Brady gave an exclamation:

"Look!" he cried. "There is rescue!"

Far down on the horizon was a line of smoke.

Presently the black hull of a steamship showed. The row-boat was right in her course.

At once hope revived.

The sailors again eagerly bent to their oars.

The course of the steamship was noted and the boat was kept in its way. Every moment she drew nearer.

One of the sailors tied a shirt on an oar and hoisted it as a signal of distress. A distant blast from the steamer's whistle told them that they were seen.

Nearer drew the rescuing craft.

Soon she was slowed down but a few hundred yards away.

The little boat rowed alongside.

"Ahoy the boat!" came from the bridge of the steamer.

"Ahoy the steamer!"

"What boat are you?"

"Castaways from the yacht Hyacinthe!"

"Do you want anything?"

"We want to come aboard."

"Lay by for the gangway."

"Aye, aye!"

This was lowered and the castaways soon were upon the steamer's deck. She was the *Panama*, of the Central American line and due to touch at Tampa.

All this Old King Brady learned at once.

Then the castaways were given food and made comfortable. It is needless to say that they were grateful.

The steamer stood away upon her course. She was a freighter and carried no passengers.

"Well," said Old King Brady to Harry, "we are on deck once more, my lad. Lucky enough!"

"To be sure. But it looks to me as if we were off the scent."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, our birds are scattered. Steele is on the island and Rivera is somewhere in the same predicament we were in. Perhaps they will not be so lucky as we in being picked up."

"In that case—"

"The ocean will defeat the ends of justice."

"Well, we cannot help it. The best we can do now is to get off at Tampa and come back to Jacksonville. Perhaps there we can charter a craft and a posse of men to capture Steele."

"It looks like our only move."

"So it is."

The plan was decided upon.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ISLAND DESERTED.

The *Panama* proved a swift sailer and soon had rounded Key West and stood up along the inner coast of Florida.

In due time she was docked at Tampa.

The detectives went ashore.

They dismissed the mutinous crew and then took a train to Jacksonville.

There they proceeded to a hotel and indulged in a day's rest.

The case thus far had presented no pleasing features. They were not at all satisfied with its development.

The real criminal as they believed, Rivera, had escaped and no doubt ere this was at the bottom of the sea.

This was not a gratifying reflection.

The detectives wanted to secure the murderer of Douglas Wild and the assassin of Hugo Page, which they believed Rivera to be, and have the satisfaction and triumph of bringing him to justice.

To be sure, there was Merton Steele, but he was only a minor figure.

However, there was no other way but to make the best of it and be satisfied with the capture of Steele.

He bade fair to give them plenty of trouble and his capture was by no means a foregone conclusion.

The Bradys therefore decided to drop Rivera entirely.

They would locate Steele. Then if any reason existed for believing that Rivera had escaped the embrace of the ocean, he could also be tracked down.

The Bradys left their hotel and went down to the wharves.

They had soon succeeded in chartering a small steam yacht, whose captain agreed to land them at Black Key in quick order.

Then the detectives went to the police headquarters in Jacksonville.

It was easy to find a score of plucky men ready for just such an expedition. They were ordered to report, all armed, at the wharf.

That evening the *Black Rose*, Captain Carter, dropped down the river to the bar and put to sea.

The Bradys and a score of armed men were aboard.

All that night the *Black Rose* steamed on in a calm sea.

The next afternoon, islands showed on her bow.

The captain said:

"Black Key is just to the south there, sir. We'll come up on her lee."

"Very good!" agreed Old King Brady. "Or, what is better, if possible, get one of the islands between us and the Key."

"All right, sir."

The *Black Rose* thus kept a trifle to the north.

When she approached the Black Key it was behind one of the small islands. Late in the afternoon she anchored just under its lee.

Now plans were laid for invading the enemy's domain.

It was certain that there would be resistance. It was deemed best to, if possible, take the foe by surprise.

So darkness was waited for.

It soon came.

Very cautiously boats were lowered and the armed men entered them. They rowed away to the island.

Very cautiously they approached it in the darkness, for the detectives knew that it was more than possible that guards were yet on the shore.

Silently the boats approached the beach.

Then the landing was made.

The coast seemed clear.

The detectives led their men up over the cliff.

No alarm was given.

No sound was heard from the plantation. It looked as if the foe were entirely off their guard.

Nearer they crept to the palisade.

They reached it and climbed it. Just ahead a faint light glowed.

"Good!" whispered Old King Brady. "They are off guard. It will be a complete surprise."

"I don't see the buildings," said Harry, straining his gaze. "Have we taken the wrong path?"

It was certainly a very surprising fact. The buildings were not visible.

The invaders crawled through a thicket of Spanish bayonet.

Then they came upon a startling revelation.

The buildings were gone.

Only a smouldering heap of ashes remained. Fire had destroyed them.

Astounded, the invaders made a quick investigation. This resulted in more thrilling discoveries.

Upon the ground about were fully half a dozen corpses. They were bodies of coolies.

What did it mean?

This was the question now asked.

What had become of Steele and the rest of the plantation men? Had they been attacked by an invading foe or had there been a revolt.

It was by no means an easy question to answer.

"Let us search the island," cried Old King Brady. "We must know the truth."

"Wait a moment," cried Harry. "I believe one of these fellows is alive."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

Harry was kneeling down over one of the coolies. He gave him a draught of whisky and supported his head.

He came to quickly.

In a few moments he was able to sit up and look about him in a wild-eyed way.

"Heap big fightee," he replied in answer to questions. "Mistler Steele, he leave island. Coolies fight. No wantee stay. Wantee go. Mistler Steele, he sailee way!"

"Why did Steele leave the island?" asked Old King Brady in surprise.

"Me no tellee. Dunno!"

"How did he leave?"

"Stleamer passee. Dey gib signal allee same. Stleamer stop. Mistler Steele an' Mistler Rivera with few others slail. We no lettee go. Big fightee. Much coolie killed. Me hurtee bad."

It was an astonishing revelation.

The Bradys looked at each other.

"What is that?" asked Old King Brady. "Did you say Mr. Rivera was with Steele?"

"Yeppee. Mistler Rivera comee back in boat. Yachtee get wrecked. He talkee much with Steele. Dey go away."

"And you had a fight with them before they left?"

"Yeppee! Too many white men. Coolie no stand show. Dey settee fire to houses an' den dey go."

"Is there anybody else on the island?"

"Me no think so."

Old King Brady arose.

He turned to Harry and the crew of the steamer.

"Well," he said, with disappointment, "here is a pretty go. It can be easily seen, however, they have slipped us."

"But what started them?" asked Harry.

"I think I can understand. Rivera and his men, by good luck, managed to find their way back to the island."

"Yes."

"Well, something gave them a fright. Perhaps they thought we would be sure to return and they have decided to seek another hiding place."

"That explains it all," cried Harry. "They have given up Black Key and left it a howling waste behind them."

"Just so."

"Our expedition here was all for naught then and—"

"Not so!"

"Ah! Why?"

"We have learned the true facts in the case. We have discovered that Rivera the murderer is still alive and it is possible for us to capture him."

"Right!" cried Harry, as if with inspiration. "I can see it all. It behooves us, therefore, to go back to our steamer and return to Jacksonville."

"Yes."

"But it is not going to be easy to get track of those fellows until we learn where they were bound."

"Look here, Cuff," said Old King Brady, bending down over the coolie again. "Can you tell us the name of the steamer they hailed?"

"Me no can," replied the coolie.

"Do you know where she was bound?"

The coolie was thoughtful. Suddenly he cried with inspiration:

"Me thinkee she go to New York!"

"New York!"

The Bradys were astounded.

They could hardly believe their senses.

"To New York," repeated Harry. "The audacity of the thing! What are they thinking of?"

"I should say so."

"Right into the lion's mouth."

"Sure."

"But, on the whole, they have little to risk. Nobody will be on the outlook for them there."

"That is very true. Well, our game is easy to understand."

"Yes."

"We must go back to New York!"

"At once."

The Bradys turned to their men.

"Take this poor fellow into the boat," was the command. The coolie was frantic with joy.

He clung to the legs of his benefactors in very excess of joy and gratitude.

"Me no forgettee," he cried. "Me be Melican man's best friend!"

Back to the boats the party went.

There was no use in lingering in the vicinity.

Old King Brady approached the captain of the steam yacht.

"Look here, my man," he said, "you want money?"

"Who does not?" asked the master of the Black Rose.

"How quickly can you take us back to Jacksonville?"

The captain looked at the morning sky and at the sea. Then he said:

"That I can't tell."

"Well, crowd on all steam and get there as quick as you can. For every hour you beat our passage out I'll give you twenty dollars."

This was incentive enough.

The Black Rose was quickly under way and her engines were working to the utmost.

She fairly flew through the water.

She beat her record out by nearly five hours.

Landed on the Jacksonville wharf, Old King Brady paid off the men and then the detectives started on the run for the depot.

But they found a train for New York all in readiness.

They boarded it and soon were being whirled away homeward with lightning speed.

When they reached New York the next night they computed the time and reckoned that the steamer must have arrived that same day.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VILLAINS ARE FOUND.

It was the belief of the Bradys that the object of the two villains, Steele and Rivera, in coming to New York was to get passage to Europe on some trans-Atlantic steamer.

So their first move was to report to Headquarters and have men at every steamer due to leave that day.

Then they looked up the arrivals of all southern steamers.

And they found that the Vigilancia from Brazil had just some in.

As no other southern steamer had arrived in the past twenty-four hours, they naturally concluded that she was the boat they wanted.

So they paid her a visit.

The captain admitted that he had taken several passengers aboard at Black Key, and two of them answered the description of Steele and Rivera.

Step by step the Bradys tracked them.

They found the cabman who took them from the pier.

He was a shrewd Jehu.

"Yes," he declared, "I took the coveys away from here. I was not to tell anything about it."

Old King Brady saw the point.

The fellow was after his tip.

"Look here, you scoundrel," he said sternly, "don't you attempt to deceive me. I am right onto your game. Do you see that? I'll lock you up if you don't tell me the truth."

Old King Brady flashed his star in the fellow's face.

The cabby wilted.

"Oh! I didn't know ye were peelers," he said. "All right, boss, I'm under orders."

"Where did you take them?"

"To a place on Forty-fifth street."

"What place?"

"Don't ye know? Dandy Jim's place. It's where all the high-toned crooks put up in New York."

The Bradys entered the cab.

"Drive us to the corner of Forty-fifth street," said Old King Brady. "You can drop us there."

"All right, sir."

The cabby whipped up his horses and the detectives were whirled away uptown.

They pulled down the curtains.

Then they made some changes in their personal appearance.

When they alighted at the corner of Forty-fifth street they would hardly have been recognized by even a most intimate friend.

They were types of clever crooks flashily got up, and with the air of men of that ilk.

The cabby was paid and dismissed.

Then the Bradys walked leisurely along the street.

They made sure that they were not observed by anyone in particular. Then they halted before the entrance of a respectable-looking house.

The portico of this extended out upon the sidewalk.

The doors were heavily carved and big lions guarded the stoop.

The Bradys mounted and pressed the bell.

A servant in livery appeared.

"Who do you want to see?" he asked.

"We want to secure a room," replied Old King Brady.

"Have you references?"

"Is Jim Carey in?"

"Mr. Carey is upstairs, sir."

"Well, just tell him that Joe Bent and Sam Floyd from Chicago want a place to spend the night."

"Wait a moment," said Harry, as the servant started away.

The young man wrote the names on a card.

The servant disappeared.

In a short while he returned and said:

"Mr. Carey says he don't recall the names, but he reckons you are all right from the description I gave him and you kin have a room."

"Good for you, Pedro," said Old King Brady. "Here's a memento for you. You're a good boy."

He placed a crisp bank-note in the negro's hands.

The rest was easy.

They were shown to a room just overhead and in the front of the house. As they entered, a peculiar sound caught their ears.

It came from the next room.

It was plainly the clicking of glasses and the unmistakable rattle of poker chips.

All was accompanied by a low murmur of voices.

It was plain that a game was going on in the next room. This interested the detectives.

They closed the door and then began to look about them.

A door connected with the next room, but this was closed and bolted.

The detectives placed their ears to the door.

The low murmur of voices could be heard. After a time a word or two was distinguished.

But yet they were not able to guess who might be in the room.

If it was their birds there was no way of knowing it without some method could be devised for plainer hearing.

The detectives went to the windows.

The day was just drawing to a close.

Unfortunately the windows looked out upon the street.

A fire-escape platform extended to the window of the adjoining room.

But to get out upon this would attract attention from the street below.

The Bradys were stuck.

They were at a loss what to do.

But they were not of the kind to abandon a project.

Old King Brady went to the hall door and opened it softly.

In the hall the laughter and voices could be more plainly heard, for there was a transom over the door.

"Harry," whispered Old King Brady, "we have got to have a peep into that room."

"That's right," agreed the young detective.

"I have no doubt our men are there."

"I think so."

"Now, I have a plan."

"Well?"

"I will step quickly out into the hall. Nobody seems to be in sight. You follow me, and when I bend over, step on my back and look over the transom."

"It's risky."

"Yes, but it must be done!"

"Just as you say."

"Go ahead."

Harry followed instructions.

Old King Brady dodged silently out into the hall.

Harry followed quickly.

The old detective bent down.

Harry stepped lightly on his back and peered over the transom. He saw the whole interior of the room.

Four men sat at a table.

One the detective recognized as Dandy Jim, the proprietor of the house.

The one next him was Cool Dick Small, one of the greatest gamblers in New York.

The other two were Steele and Rivera.

At last the game was run down.

Harry dropped down and the two detectives dodged back into the room.

"Well?" asked Old King Brady.

"We've got 'em!"

"They're in there?"

"Yes."

"Good! It is just as I thought. Now we must get hold of them."

Both detectives knew that a precipitate course would be fatal.

The villains would escape.

Aided by the attaches of the place they would be sure to get away. It would be difficult to again get track of them.

There was but one way and this was to employ strategy.

The moment the villains left the house and reached the open air the detectives could strike.

So the Bradys remained in their room and waited.

Dandy Jim's place was a private hostelry for fashionable crooks.

They came from all parts of the country and made their headquarters there while in New York.

It was rapidly growing dark.

Lights were lit all through the house and immediately there came a tap on the door of each room.

"Come down to dinner!"

The detectives waited until those in the next room had gone down.

Then they made sure of their disguises and also descended.

The dining-room was in the basement. It held four small tables.

Every seat was taken.

The detectives sat opposite a noted confidence woman and a cracksman of the first rank.

The table was well set and there were excellent servants. In short, all appointments were in keeping with those of a fashionable boarding house.

The conversation was easy and free. Some of the crooks were old acquaintances.

The detectives played their part with careless ease and abandon.

The woman, whose name was Slippery Meg Jones, seemed to take quite a fancy to Harry.

"What's your best hold?" she asked finally.

"Well," said Harry, "I've followed every kind of a game. But I've had the best luck raising checks."

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes, and nothing could work better."

"There's a heap of money in it I'm told," ventured Meg.

"Yes, and lots of risk."

"Ever get nipped?"

"Once."

"How?"

"Well, an old detective in this city called Old King Brady nipped me. But I got off on lack of evidence."

"Old King Brady!"

The name went around the room.

It was evidently familiar to all the crooks. The old detective smiled grimly as he noted this.

"He's quite a bird," declared Dandy Jim. "He never came into my joint, though."

"Probably he's not onto it."

"Yes he is," declared Harry, positively. "I heard him mention it once."

"The deuce you say!" cried Dandy Jim, with something like alarm. "He don't trouble me, anyway!"

"Oh! no. He wouldn't do that. You're a useful man to him."

"A useful man?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Why, you bring all the chief crooks here and he knows where to find 'em when he wants 'em."

A dead silence fell on the room.

Then Dandy Jim arose and advanced toward the two detectives.

"Where are you two gents from?" he asked. "What are your references?"

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE CROOKS' DEN.

It was a startling incident.

It was wholly unexpected by the detectives. Harry realized that perhaps he had been a bit too outspoken.

But he said:

"Didn't you ever hear of me? I supposed everybody knew Sam Floyd. This gentleman is my partner, Joe Bent, who handles more queer money than any other man in this country."

It was plain that Carey was not wholly satisfied.

"I know every crook between here and Frisco," he cried. "But I never heard of you."

"That's queer."

"Well, yes. There's a Jack Floyd, of Saginaw. Ever know him?"

As luck had it, Harry had heard of this fellow.

So he said promptly:

"Certainly! He's a mail thief."

It cleared the air.

Carey bowed low.

"Are you any relation?"

"Ye—es! Somewhat distant."

"What's brought you to New York?"

"I've got a little job I'm working over at the Waldorf. If I have luck I'll make some money."

"Then you vouch for this man?"

"For Joe Bent? Well, ask any of the queer people. He's O. K."

"What do you know about Old King Brady?"

"Oh! not very much. I've run up against him as I told you once."

"Well, he is a cunning old fox. If he shows up around my joint, he'll get into trouble, that's all."

With this Carey went back and sat down.

Then the meal went on.

But the detectives saw that they were marked men.

They made all efforts to be light and pleasant with the crooks and gain their confidence if possible.

But in spite of their best attempts, there was a reserve.

All seemed to hold a bit aloof except the woman Slippery Meg.

She seemed especially impressed with Harry and was exceedingly gracious. The young detective cultivated her acquaintance.

After a while Harry ventured to lean forward and ask:

"As a favor will you tell me who are the blokes at Carey's table?"

Meg looked over and said:

"Oh! those two jays are special friends of Jim's. I think one of 'em is a Spaniard named Rivera and the other is Merton Steele. He's an all-round crook and a fly detective. He was sweet on me once."

"Then you know him well?"

"Do I? Well, I guess!"

"Does he hang out around the city?"

"Yes, but I hear that they're going to Europe in a day or two. The Spaniard I believe is some big gun. He ain't a crook, you know."

"Oh! is that so?"

"That's the way of it."

"I shouldn't think Carey would trust him in here."

"Carey? Oh! he's gone daft. I never saw such a man. Anything that Steele says, goes with him."

"Do you know what way they are going to Europe?"

"On a private yacht, I hear."

"A private yacht?"

"Yes. It seems the Spaniard has loads of money. He's a little soft on Steele. So he's bought a yacht and is getting ready for the start."

"Humph! that's fine for Steele."

"Well, you bet!"

"I'd like a snap like that!"

"So would I."

"Do you know what kind of a boat they've got?"

"What do you mean?"

"Is she steam or sail?"

"Oh! I think she's a steam vessel. I believe she lies over in the North river somewhere."

"I'm interested. I'd like to get the chance to go, too. I wonder if there'd be any likelihood of it?"

"I dunno. It all depends on Steele. But I think you'll do better here in New York."

"Do you?"

"Yes. I've taken a shine to you, lad. You'll get on. I'll help you. What do you like?"

"Anything," replied Harry.

"Well, we'll try confidence. You and I could do well enough."

"We'll talk it over. Where are you going this evening?"

"Over to Rahway, I'll be back to-morrow night."

"Well?"

"If you'll be here to-morrow night, I'll meet you."

"All right."

Harry now turned away. Old King Brady had been trying to get up a conversation with Steele.

He would accept no overtures.

The meal was finished and all returned upstairs. In the long parlors they assembled for a few moments.

Old King Brady managed to corner Rivera and have some conversation with him. The result was surprising.

He found that he was a gentleman of experience and fine education.

He was far from being the hardened criminal and soulless brute that the detective had fancied.

"Then you are a stranger in New York?" asked Old King Brady.

"To the contrary, I am not so familiar with any other place."

"Ah! that is a surprise to me."

"It is true."

"Do you know anybody in or about the city? Have you done any work here?"

"I have never done but one crooked job in my life," said Rivera. "And that is the heaviest of all crimes."

"Ah! what do you mean?"

"Murder!"

For a moment the old detective was astounded. He hardly knew what to do or say.

The blunt confession was wholly unexpected.

He stared at Rivera.

"Murder!" he ejaculated. "Whew! You are a high roller."

"If the truth was known it could be called justifiable homicide," declared Rivera.

"Yes," said Old King Brady, "you don't look like a man that would kill for the sake of killing."

"I assure you, no. The person I killed did me a great wrong. I could not spare his life."

"Well, I feel sure you are in the right. Some strange things are happening nowadays. Did you hear of that queer disappearance up at Mamaroneck, a short while ago?"

Rivera started as if shot.

He gazed keenly and searchingly at the old detective.

But Old King Brady's face was calm and inscrutable. There was no evidence of design visible.

The Spaniard was deceived.

"What were the circumstances?" he asked, quietly.

"Rather mysterious. A very wealthy resident of the town—let me see, his name was Page, I think—went out to walk with a friend. Neither ever returned."

"It is not known whether the friend murdered him or

just what happened. The friend was an utter stranger and had never been seen in the town before."

Rivera smiled grimly.

"A very peculiar case," he said.

"Yes, so I think."

"It is likely to always remain a dark mystery."

"I believe it."

"Well, many strange things happen."

"That is true. But the latest is that very great mystery of the private yacht."

Rivera again gave a start.

Once more he scanned Old King Brady's face. But he read nothing there.

The old detective, however, had gained his point.

He saw at once that his suspicions were correct.

Rivera was connected with both crimes. He was the murderer of both Douglas Wild and Hugo Page.

"Private yacht?" repeated Rivera. "What do you mean?"

"Did you not hear of it?"

"No."

"Well, a yacht, the *Hyacinthe*, was found drifting off Sandy Hook by an incoming steamer."

"Two detectives boarded her and found a murder and a suicide on board. The owner of the yacht, Hugo Page, lay in his life blood. Beside him was the body of his wife—"

"Wife? Never!" flashed forth Rivera. The blood mantled his cheeks, but all in that instant he saw his mistake.

"I beg pardon," he said, "I don't believe the woman could be his wife."

"Ah! you are familiar with the case?"

"Now you call it to mind I believe I have read some of the details. I know the general belief is that his wife suicided, but I don't believe she was his wife."

"Did you know the parties in life?"

"I knew of them," then Rivera's brow contracted. "But don't think that I am connected with that crime!"

"You?" exclaimed Old King Brady, with well-feigned astonishment, "I never dreamed of it."

"I killed my man in fair fight and on even terms. Any fair-minded man will agree that he deserved it."

"Had he wronged you?"

"Wronged me? The worst and most treacherous wrong one man could inflict upon another."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "I am interested."

"As you seem to be so interested and sympathetic withal," said Rivera, "I will tell you about it."

"I will be glad to hear."

"Well, we will conjure up an easy picture. First, two lads in school make friends. Later in life they became business partners."

"They succeed and get rich. Then one marries a lovely woman with whom he lives happily for two years."

"But one day he returns to find his home desolate. The woman he has loved, gone. All is over. The treachery of his partner is shown."

"He has robbed him of his wife. He has stealthily won her affections. He has induced her to fly with him to some far part of the earth.

"I was the unfortunate man. When I met the scoundrel who robbed me of my wife, my soul rose within me and I took justice into my own hands and I killed him."

Rivera trembled with the dramatic force and vigor of his speech. As he went on his voice grew louder and everybody in the room heard him.

It was an impressive moment.

Not one in the party but felt for a moment a thrill of sympathy.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHREWD WORK.

Even the Bradys looked upon the Spaniard with compassion.

It showed him to be not altogether a criminal of the hardened type. But he was no less a murderer.

And they knew their duty.

Revenge should never draw any man, no matter how foully wronged, to commit murder.

Nothing could excuse the crime.

He had deliberately planned the deed, had hired a sneak detective and villain, Merton Steele, to entrap his victims.

But there was yet a mystery.

Why had he sought and taken the life of Douglas Wild?

What connection Wild could have had with the case was beyond the ken of the detectives.

Old King Brady ventured to say:

"The crime which you have committed was aggravated."

"But the worst of wrongs," replied Rivera. "But it is all over. I know that I have forever ostracised myself from society and friends."

"But I don't care for that, I am now a criminal like all the rest of you, and probably the greatest one here."

"Henceforth my life shall be devoted to crime. I am going to make my home with criminals. I have given up all else."

"In a few days I will sail abroad with my friend here. In the capitals of Europe I know that I shall find diversion. I have plenty of money. This is my story."

The detectives exchanged glances.

They did not dare to act.

Here was the game right in their hands and with plenty of evidence.

But to attempt an arrest against such odds would be fatal.

It was necessary to wait for the right opportunity. It would come.

At this moment Carey put in:

"Come! Let's bury all this and have a social game. Who'll come in?"

"I'm with you!" cried Steele. "Come on, Rivera."

The Spaniard allowed himself to be drawn to a table. The other crooks with the exception of the detectives pleaded excuses.

Carey looked askance at the detectives, but said:

"Perhaps you'll join us."

"Certainly!" said Old King Brady with alacrity. "I never refuse."

"You can show us how the game is played in Chicago."

"With pleasure."

All seated themselves at a table.

The cards were dealt.

The game was poker.

For a time the game went on very smoothly. It was an even thing all around.

Then matters began to run in Old King Brady's favor. He carried phenomenal hands and won largely.

When he had accumulated a large pile of money, he suddenly arose.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I never play cards for the money. I always play for sport. I propose to disburse this pile I have won in an equal division."

"No, no!" protested the other gamblers. "We don't squeal."

"Keep the money!"

"It's the game!"

The detective found that while he had won the admiration of the party for his generosity, he had touched their pride.

"Well, I want to quit now," he said.

"And not play longer?"

"Exactly! Of course, it's not the fair thing to do, not to give you a chance to win your money back."

"Oh! that's all right," and everybody arose. But Old King Brady persisted.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, then," he said. "I'll put up my winnings and we'll all shake for it."

Certainly the old detective was proving himself the prince of good fellows. He was persistent and all finally agreed.

Then the dice were shook.

The winnings fell to Carey, the keeper of the house.

This seemed as it should be and at once made the old detective popular with the keeper of the joint.

The little party broke up and it was proposed to retire. The detectives went to their room.

They heard Steele and Rivera in the next room turn in. Then Old King Brady said:

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Harry. It won't do to let them slip us."

"No."

"You turn in and sleep. I'll do the same after midnight, when you can get up and keep watch."

"All right," agreed Harry.

This was done.

Harry slept one part of the night and Old King Brady the other.

At an early hour everybody in the house was astir.

Then all went down to breakfast.

The detectives were now treated with great consideration.

It was evident that they had made a good impression. After breakfast the entire company dispersed. Some went back to their rooms and others out upon the street.

The detectives heard Steel and Rivera preparing to go out.

Old King Brady said:

"Harry, I think we had better go out first. We shall avoid the suspicion of following them."

"I think it a good plan."

"Then we can shadow them with ease."

"Very good."

So the Bradys left the house.

Once out upon the street they dodged into a doorway and quietly made a fresh change of disguise.

Presently Rivera and Steele appeared on the street.

The detectives shadowed them.

They went west toward the North river. It was easy to guess their purpose.

"They mean to visit the yacht," whispered Old King Brady.

"That is the way of it, no doubt," agreed Harry. "There will be no better time to capture them."

"You are right."

However, the detectives were not prepared as yet to make the arrest.

They continued to follow the villains.

Soon they reached the North river wharves.

At one of these was moored a handsome little steam yacht.

On the bow was the name:

"Rosemary."

The two crooks went aboard.

The detectives remained on the wharf.

Just then a man lounged along the wharf and at sight of Old King Brady gave a start and a cry of recognition.

It was one of the servants from the Douglas Wild house at Mamaroneck.

His name was Stephen Carter.

"Why, how did you know us?" asked Old King Brady in surprise.

"How could I help but know ye?" replied Carter.

"Though ye've grown whiskers since I saw ye last."

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the old detective. "I thought our disguise perfect. But evidently it is not."

"Perhaps Carter is unusually penetrative," said Harry.

"However," cried Old King Brady, "you're just the man we want to see, Carter."

"How is that?" asked the porter.

"You saw the dark stranger who went away with Douglas Wild that night of his disappearance?"

"I did."

"You are very keen at recognition. Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"Would I know my wife? Well, I guess I would!"

"Good for you. Stay here with us a while."

"What for?"

"We believe that he is aboard that yacht there and will soon appear. We want you to identify him."

"Sho! You don't say!" exclaimed Carter in surprise. "Well, you bet I'll know him."

"Good! I hope you will."

Just at this moment Steele and Rivera came out of the cabin.

They came down upon the wharf.

They passed almost within touching distance of Carter and the detectives. After they had gone by, Old King Brady asked:

"Did you know him?"

To the astonishment of the detectives Carter declared: "He's not the man!"

"What?" gasped Old King Brady, "do you mean that?"

"Dead sartin!"

"Oh! well, he is the man!"

"No he's not, I tell you. I know what I'm talking about. I never forget a face. I tell you he's not the man. It's the other one."

"The other one?"

"Yes. The one you call Steele."

"Do you mean the tallest man?"

"Yes."

The detectives were amazed.

Carter held to his point stoutly. He would not be shaken.

"Well, Carter," said Old King Brady finally, "we are going to arrest both of those men."

"Oh! well, it's likely they're both in it," declared the porter.

"Yes, but we must be sure of it. So be on hand at Headquarters later in the day."

"All right, sir."

With this the detectives turned away. They saw Steele and Rivera enter a liquor saloon.

A sudden idea occurred to Harry.

He conveyed it to Old King Brady.

"Capital!" declared the old detective. "Let us try it."

They dodged behind a lumber pile.

In a few moments they had assumed their disguises of the two crooks, Floyd and Bent.

Thus attired they boldly entered the saloon.

Almost the first thing they beheld was Steele and Rivera at a side table.

There was instant recognition.

They were cordial.

"Sit down and have a drink," said Steele. "What do you hit down here?"

"We came down to look for the arrival of a friend on a steamer," replied Old King Brady.

"Have a drink!"

"Thanks."

The detectives ordered a temperance drink. Then they fell into conversation with Steele and Rivera.

And as Old King Brady leaned over the table talking with the self-confessed murderer, he was accorded an astounding revelation.

A curious mixture of hair showed on the side of Rivera's head.

Beneath the black hair was a fringe of lighter. It required but a glance for the old detective to read the truth. Rivera wore a wig.

CHAPTER XV.

WHICH ENDS THE CASE.

Rivera was disguised.

It was a most astounding discovery. Old King Brady's theories were all upset.

If he was disguised it was not easy to locate him.

He might not be Rivera the Spaniard after all. He might be anybody. Perhaps after all Carter was right.

For a time the old detective was unable to grasp the situation.

Then he tried to think of the proper plan to pursue.

Should he now boldly arrest the villain or should he wait until he had inquired more deeply into his character?

He was disposed now to believe that he was not a Spaniard at all.

If not, who was he?

The old detective talked with Rivera for a long while.

All the time he was trying to place him. But he was wholly unable to recognize him.

Finally Steele and Rivera arose and went to the bar.

It gave Old King Brady a chance to whisper to Harry: "I have made a discovery!"

"Eh?" exclaimed the young detective. "What is it?"

"Rivera is not Rivera!"

"What?"

"He is simply disguised!"

"Disguised? Do you mean that?"

"Yes."

Harry was astonished.

"Who is he?"

"I don't know."

"Is not that strange?"

"I am trying to place him. I cannot succeed."

"Then he is not a Spaniard?"

"I think not."

Harry was nonplussed. The two detectives sat for a while at the table. Then they arose.

Steele and Rivera were just about leaving the saloon.

Old King Brady came closely up behind Rivera.

They had reached the street.

Then came the grand coup.

The old detective leaned forward and with one swift move swept the hat and wig from Rivera's head.

In that instant Steele made a spring forward and away down the street.

"Chase him, Harry!" cried Old King Brady, as he forced Rivera back against the building and handcuffed him.

To his surprise the murderer made no resistance.

There was a dull, hopeless light in his eyes.

"So you are detectives," he said. "Well, it's just as well.

I shall be glad when it's all over. I have carried the game along as far as I care to."

"Then you are willing to make a confession?"

"Yes."

"All right."

Old King Brady signalled a cab.

He had no doubt of Harry's ability to overtake and capture Steele. So he did not join in the pursuit.

He placed his prisoner in the cab and they drove away to Headquarters.

Arrived there, almost the first person Old King Brady saw at the door was Stephen Carter.

"I'm under orders, sir," said the porter. "It's for you to say what you want of me."

An idea struck the detective.

"Come in here!" he said.

Carter followed him into the office of the captain of police.

Then the old detective pulled off Rivera's hat. He looked at his skin and said:

"Bring me a sponge with some ammonia and water."

This was done.

Old King Brady applied the ammonia to the villain's skin. At once the dark hue disappeared.

The cosmetic yielded and the true complexion of the prisoner showed.

After he had removed the complexion-stain, Old King Brady turned his prisoner about.

"Now, Carter," he said, "do you know this man?"

The porter stared at the prisoner.

Then he rubbed his eyes.

He gave a great cry.

"Lord have mercy! It is—yes, it is my master. It's Mr. Wild!"

"What?" exclaimed Old King Brady and the police captain in one breath.

The prisoner turned and said quietly:

"Yes, gentlemen, I am Douglas Wild."

The sensation was tremendous.

Old King Brady never was more astonished in his life.

"You Douglas Wild?" he repeated. "We thought you murdered!"

"No," replied Wild, "I am very much alive as you see."

"Just so. But you told me you were a murderer."

"And so I am!"

"You?"

"Yes, I."

"Who is your victim?"

"Hugo Page, of the yacht Hyacinthe."

Old King Brady's eyes opened.

"Then the woman who suicided—"

"Was my wife."

Presently Douglas Wild said:

"I am a murderer. I am ready and willing to die. But I will tell you again my story."

"In younger life I married happily. Among my friends was Hugo Page. He proved a viper."

"In an evil hour he induced my wife to flee with him."

It broke up my happy home. I have lived a hermit's life since. I have lived for revenge.

"I employed Steele as a detective to find Page. He located him at last far down on the Black Key island. Then Steele enticed them to New York.

"The night I left my home in Mamaroneck, I was with Steele. We rowed out to the *Hyacinthe* and went aboard. I met my recreant wife on the deck.

"She shrieked and fled to her stateroom. There, fearing awful consequences, she madly drank poison.

"Her cries of agony brought Page to her stateroom. I also went thither to witness her death. I met the traitorous friend and we fought.

"We fought like demons, but I killed him. Then we scared the crew into leaving the yacht and set her adrift. The rest of the miserable story you know.

"To evade the law I disguised myself as Don Luis Rivera. On my private yacht, the *Swallow*, Steele and I fled to Black Key.

"There we thought it possible to falsify the title and gain possession of the plantation, and I fancied I might live there the rest of my miserable life in safety, and unmolested.

"But I am satisfied that it is idle to attempt to escape retribution. I did wrong and I am willing to stand punishment. This is all of my wretched story."

The police captain had taken all down in his journal.

Then the prisoner subscribed to it and was led away to his cell.

Old King Brady, deeply impressed, left the police station. He was anxious about Harry.

But just at this moment he saw a cab dash around the corner.

In it were three men.

One was Steele, well handcuffed.

The other were Harry and no other than Benson, the brave skipper of the *Hyacinthe*.

After vainly cruising about in the fog for the castaways, Benson abandoned all hope.

He returned to the island later to find it deserted.

Then he spent a week searching for Old King Brady and his men. Finally convinced that the quest was useless, he gave it up.

He returned to New York.

As chance had it he landed at one of the piers just in time to see a man come dodging out from behind a lumber pile.

The fellow ran up to him.

"I say, skipper," he cried, "put me across the river in your boat and I'll pay you well."

Benson gave one look at the fellow and there was mutual recognition.

It was Merton Steele.

"Steele!" said Bob, coolly. "I'll put you across the river. Don't fear! Who is after you?"

The villain with a curse drew a pistol and fired at the sailor. The bullet grazed his side.

Then Benson descended upon him like an avalanche.

In less time than it takes to tell it he was a prisoner. Just then Harry came rushing up.

"Benson!" he cried, with joy. Then he fairly embraced the sailor.

Benson left his crew on the wharf and accompanied Harry to the Tombs with his prisoner.

On the way they were met by Old King Brady, as we have seen.

The rest is easily told.

Steele was at once placed in a cell.

He was charged with being accessory to the murder of Hugo Page. There were other counts against him also. Douglas Wild was indicted for murder in the first degree. But his case never came to trial.

One day, when the turnkey looked into his cell he saw Wild lying face down on the stone floor.

He was quite dead.

Heart disease was given as the cause. It was no doubt induced by his great sorrow.

But Steele went to trial and was convicted. He was sentenced to twenty years at Sing Sing.

There he may be to-day.

The Bradys were given great credit for their successful solution of the private yacht mystery.

From first to last they had been always "on deck" in more than one sense. As usual they were victorious.

Some distant heirs inherited the property of Douglas Wild.

Benson became the legal owner of the *Hyacinthe* and was thereby made happy.

As for the Bradys, they were soon deep in another case. But we will try and tell that later.

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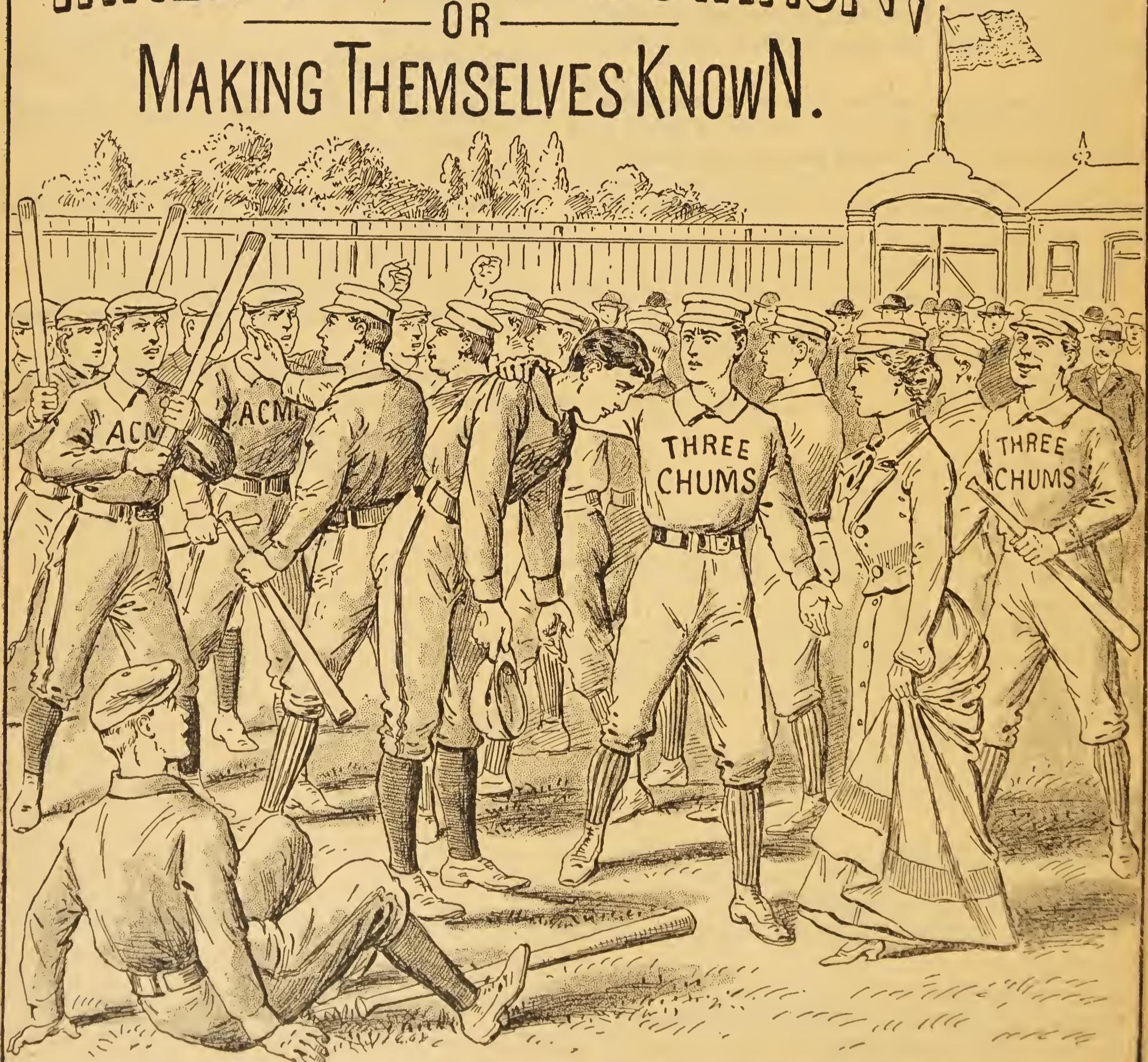
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